

# Industrial Worker

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE  
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD

June 2002

#1644 Vol. 99 No. 5

\$1.00 / 75 p

## Less time for work, more time for life!

Boston-area Wobblies have kicked off a campaign for a shorter work week, distributing over 2,000 flyers demanding "Less Time For Work, More Time for Life!" beginning at May Day events and culminating with a May 11 panel discussion on the fight for a shorter work week. A follow-up meeting will develop plans for future events, and launch efforts to build a broad coalition around the issue of shorter hours.

Marconi Almeida, a community organizer with the Brazilian Immigrant Center's Workers Rights Project, noted that in Brazil all workers were legally entitled to a month's paid vacation each year, as well as paid medical leave and other benefits unavailable to most U.S. workers. "In a world economy becoming ever more oppressive," Almeida noted, workers must organize and be prepared to strike both to hold onto the rights they presently have and to win back a larger portion of our lives for our own purposes.

*Industrial Worker* editor Jon Bekken pointed to International Labor Organization statistics showing that U.S. workers not put in the longest hours in the industrialized world. Indeed, while workers in the rest of the world have been fighting for and winning shorter hours, U.S. workers find themselves working ever-longer hours. The average Australian, Canadian or Mexican worker now puts in about 100 hours less on the job; our Brazilian and British fellow workers work 250 hours a year less than we do.

Immigrants, single mothers and the poor often work the longest hours, forced to take on two or three jobs just to eke out a meager living. Betty Reid Mandell, a founder of the welfare rights organization Survivors Inc., spoke of the implications of the continuing attacks on women forced to turn to the welfare system to support them in the work of caretaking. Ignoring the long hours required to raise children, U.S. government policy is to force these women into the paid workforce, where they find themselves in low-paying jobs, reliant on food pantries and overcrowded homeless shelters to survive.

Mandell contrasted the brutality of this approach with the widespread recognition in the 1970s that the means existed to provide a decent livelihood for all – embodied not only in French sociologist André Gorz's proposal for a universal 20-hour work week, but also in U.S. President Richard Nixon's 1972 proposal for a guaranteed annual wage.

For more than 60 years, Bekken pointed out, the IWW has demanded the 4-hour work day. While this position is often seen as utopian today, when the IWW adopted it the American Federation of Labor was officially committed to the 6-hour day, which several unions had won in their contracts, and the U.S. senate (hardly a radical body) had overwhelmingly passed legislation to establish a legal 30-hour work week.

Instead, while working hours have been dropping around the world for the past 50 years, U.S. workers today are working longer hours than they did 30 years ago. Automation, speed-up and other factors result in productivity doubling

*continued on page 8*



### Millions celebrate May Day, solidarity

International Workers Day commemorations, protests gain strength 4

### Profits when workers die

Bosses can earn thousands from workers' deaths 5

### Wobblies with Chinese characters?

Underground labor movement terrorizing managers & bosses 7

## Australian timber workers turn to Wobbly tactics to win new agreement

# Direct action beats International Paper

BY ADAM LINCOLN, REPRINTED FROM DIRECT ACTION, AUSTRALIA

New Zealand timber giant Carter Holt Harvey has suffered a major setback in their long-term plan to de-unionise their Australian operations. CHH is owned by International Paper, a huge North American paper and timber multinational responsible for decades of exploitation of workers, their communities and the environment.

In February, 147 unionised workers employed by CHH (Wood Panels) Tumut, in southern New South Wales used direct action to achieve what 10 months of negotiations failed to deliver – a site Enterprise Bargaining Agreement which maintains wages and conditions in line with fellow workers employed at CHH timber sites in Oberon, NSW, and Mt Gambier, South Australia.

It all began in 1999 when Australian multinational CSR ditched their timber sites as part of a restructure, selling their panel operations to CHH. Once again a new multinational took over work-sites with years of history, sweat, laughter, pain and stories; stuck a new corporate logo out the front, and claimed to "own" the business.

Ten months ago, the site unions (CFMEU-Forestry, AMWU-Metals, CEPU-Electrical Trades) negotiated agreements with CHH to maintain and improve the conditions under the expired CSR agreement. This was wrapped up quickly (except at Tumut) and it all looked too easy – because it was! CHH had other plans.

In their usual style (as shown in NZ and elsewhere) they were looking for a weak link to start de-unionising their operations. They thought they found it in Tumut. The plan took shape when site management stalled, delayed and refused to agree to wages and conditions in line with the other CHH sites. While other CHH workers were receiving pay rises, Tumut workers were still waiting for a pay rise due under the previous agreement.

The level of militancy and job organisation had been declining for several

years at the factory, going back to the CSR days. This was due to a combination of sell-out leadership under the former CFMEU state secretary (who got the boot in late '99), complacency by workers and constant downsizing, creating an attitude that resistance was futile and the only thing worth fighting for was a redundancy package.

The plan was working. This is the site which invented the "holding pen" for workers displaced by job losses in the laminating section, left to rot in token demeaning jobs in the hope they would resign and leave, without any access to the generous redundancy package in the EBA. Management took great pleasure in humiliating and disrespecting these workers as well as anyone unfortunate enough to be on "light duties" after workplace accidents.

By February, the workers had had enough. They wanted their new Agreement, they wanted the 6 percent pay rise, they wanted the right to smoke in designated areas without getting the sack, they wanted respect and they wanted parity with the other sites. The company didn't know it yet, but the IWW was about to have a major impact on their business.

When the company walked away from negotiations and cancelled scheduled paid union meetings my fellow organisers and I were faced with a problem. How to take on and beat a multi-billion dollar company that had millions to spend fighting the union?

The bosses planned for Tumut workers to cop a bad agreement so they would give up on the union, allowing CHH to repeat the process at their other sites. The previous CSR agreement was done behind closed doors by union officials and forced onto an unhappy membership in '99.

Things have changed though and CFMEU-Forestry organisers decided to practice what we preach and use the tried and true methods and principles of the IWW to sack the boss – Direct Action! It was time to repair the mistakes of the past. Leaflets be-

*continued on page 9*

## Rich get richer, workers get pink slips

The official U.S. unemployment rate jumped to 6 percent in April, or 8.6 million workers, the highest rate since August 1994.

These statistics do not include 4 million workers forced into part-time jobs or another 4.5 million who have given up looking for work. Nearly one-fifth of the officially unemployed have been jobless for over six months.

The most devastating job losses have been in the U.S. manufacturing sector. Over the last four years, a total of 2 million factory jobs have been lost – ten percent of the manufacturing work force. Those lost jobs have gone to subcontractors, temporary workers, and massive overtime – eliminating overtime in the U.S. manufacturing sector would create some 500,000 jobs.

As thousands of workers were being thrown onto the streets, labor productivity rose by 5.5 percent and output rose by 6.5

percent in the first three months of the year. Workers were fired, paid less, and made to work longer. Or, as *The New York Times* put it, "Companies managed to squeeze every last ounce of production out of their workers."

The effects of this recession are proving devastating for many workers already hard hit by the "economic prosperity" of the 1980s and 1990s.

A new study by the Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that income inequality has increased sharply over the past 20 years. In New York state, for example, inflation-adjusted income for the bottom fifth of households fell \$800 a year, while the richest fifth saw their income rise \$56,800.

The ratio of average CEO pay to average workers' pay in the United States has now reached 531 to 1, and the bosses are gaining ground fast.

Portland Wobs Open Union Hall 3 Health Workers Fed Up With Promises 4  
Victory for Purdy's Chocolates Workers 6 Distorting Labor's Heritage 10

Industrial Worker  
PO Box 13476  
Philadelphia, PA 19101

ISSN 0019-8870

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Periodicals Postage  
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Philadelphia, PA  
and additional  
mailing offices

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## Unionists meeting in Spain to coordinate struggles

Fellow Workers,

On the weekend of June 22-23 Sevilla Spain will host the semi-annual meeting of the European summit. Huge demonstrations are planned to protest global capitalism and the never-ending wars. The CGT of Spain, a syndicalist union with ties to the IWW, is one of the main organizers of the protests.

The CGT is also one of several European unions that has been working together in a loose coordination over the last few years. The coordination is convening several industrial branch meetings to allow militants from a variety of unions – mainstream, radical and syndicalist – to come together to discuss a common strategy for their industrial sector. Transportation, telecommunications and postal, health care and several other sectors will be meeting. The meetings are scheduled for the Friday before the summit in Sevilla.

At the last General Assembly, a resolution was passed encouraging fellow workers to attend. These branch meetings would make it possible for the IWW to connect up with radical unionists from around Europe. If you are interested and can attend, contact GHQ or myself at susandor@crocker.com so we can connect you with the right comrades.

Eric Chester

## Looking for solutions

John Gorman's review of *Raising the Floor* by Holly Sklar (et al.) notes that the book leaves us without an answer to many problems. However, some of the answers can be drawn out from the review itself.

First, "the enormous increase in the rent real people have to pay in the real world." A revival of labor union co-op housing. Co-op housing has been turned into a business by

real estate people. Let's put an effort into a revival. About 100,000 people now live in labor union co-op housing in New York City.

"The problem of teenage unemployment," which "cannot be solved by putting their fathers out of work," can be addressed by creating union-sponsored, worker-owned co-ops. A good opportunity for young people.

The problem of paying off college loans can, in part, be solved by starting a union-sponsored co-op college – it would probably take a year or two to start. Also, how about interest-free loans to children of union members?

Regarding "Too much cheerleading?" by Jim Ellsworth and the editor's answer, I think that a speech by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn about the Paterson strike of 1913, titled "The Truth About the Paterson Strike," is very instructive. It is reprinted in *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*, beginning on page 214.

In Solidarity,  
Raymond Solomon

## Educate about Major League Baseball sweatshops

The anti-sweatshop protesters at Pittsburgh's PNC Park were filled with joy May 12, even considering the nasty rain. We felt the solidarity from the Phoenix GMB at Bank One Ball Park on June 6th and are filled with anticipation of an action in Milwaukee during the All Star Games. We are ready and anxious to get into our community this month to build for a PNC Park anti-sweatshop action on the 4th of July – talking about union organizing rights for sweatshop workers while the Bucco play Houston.

To educate about sweatshops during the month of June and build for July, we need a new piece of educational material that calls out specific sweatshop bosses and team owners, that empowers anti-sweatshop activist across the land to hook up and head on down to the ball park. We invite you help write and use the first issue of the *Major League*

*Sweatshop Digest*, and then use it to build for Major League (or Minor League) sweatshop actions in July.

This is how you can help bring an end to MLB tyranny in the in the Global Sweatshop Industry. Make a plan for an action in July. Choose a big game to target your own team, or visit the Pirate web-site and the Buccos (or any of the Minor League teams) when they come to your town – then send us your contact information and the date that you've chosen. We'll publish it in the *Digest* along with most current anti-sweatshop MLB news. You can then use at meetings to talk about sweatshops and build for your action.

If you've been thinking about joining this fight, now is a good time. Choose a ball game in July and email (by June 1 if possible) the details to: pgh\_iww\_iu450@yahoo.com.

You'll be empowered to talk about sweatshops with great new piece of anti-sweatshop educational material throughout the month of June. This is a fight we can win, this fight can build the union, and this is an extension of our civil rights to sweatshop workers struggling to organize. The Bucs are going all the way this year!

X346812, Pittsburgh

## Police block anti-G8 march

Montreal police attacked hundreds of demonstrators protesting the summit of labor ministers from the world's eight largest industrialized economies April 16, penning them in in order to prevent a march to the summit site. Some 250 protestors were processed one by one after several hours, and bussed away from the site. Several were ticketed for illegal assembly.

Some managed to escape, aided by fast food workers who provided safe passage through their restaurant's back door.

Karina Chagnon, a spokeswoman for the Anti-Capitalist Convergence, which organized the protest, said "The G-8 is the fuzzy mitten that drives the hidden hand of the market and the iron fist of the military. The G-8 is like slavery. There is no way of reforming it. We must fight to abolish it."

## Solidarity with Shaw Centre strike

Edmonton (Alberta) Wobs have been on the picket line supporting low-paid service workers at the Shaw Convention Centre. This city-owned corporation has refused to bargain a first contract for over a year. The Edmonton IWW In Solidarity picket sign is up in the strike headquarters on the wall next to the UFCW banner.

Workers are asking the city council to step into negotiations in place of city-owned Economic Development Edmonton, who refuse to bargain in good faith. Headed by Manpower executive Audrey Luft, EDE is demanding an open shop with no union recognition, no seniority rights, and no benefits.

The Edmonton IWW asks that messages of protest, suggesting that readers will take their tourism dollars elsewhere if the city does not step and settle the strike, be sent to Mayor Bill Smith: 2nd Floor, City Hall, 1 Sir Winston Churchill Square, Edmonton AB T5J 2R7, Canada; Fax: 780-496-8292, e-mail: bill.smith@gov.edmonton.ab.ca.

**All Wobblies are cordially invited to attend...**

## The 4th Annual Upper Midwest Wobfest

**Friday July 12 – Sunday July 14  
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

(just 8 hours north of Minneapolis!)

**Come to our regional gathering for workshops, networking and socializing in the spirit of the One Big Union.**

To register write: Patrick McGuire,  
709 Jessie Ave, Winnipeg MB, R3M 0Z4  
or email greenarchy36@hotmail.com  
please register by June 30th

## Industrial Worker

The Voice of Revolutionary  
Industrial Unionism

- ★ ORGANIZATION
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ EMANCIPATION

Official newspaper of the  
**Industrial Workers  
of the World**

Post Office Box 13476  
Philadelphia, PA 19101 USA  
215/763-1274 • ghq@iww.org

**General Secretary-Treasurer:**  
Alexis Buss

**General Executive Board:**  
Bill Bradley, Joshua Freeze, Mike  
Hargis, John Hollingsworth,  
Patrick McGuire, Hazel Roehrig,  
Aaron Rothenburger

**Editor:** Jon Bekken  
11 Bexley Road #2  
Roslindale MA 02131 USA  
jbekken@bari.iww.org

ISSN 0019-8870 Periodicals  
postage paid Philadelphia, PA  
and other mailing offices.

**Postmaster:** Send address  
changes to: Industrial Worker,  
POB 13476, Phila. PA 19101 USA

**Individual Subscriptions:** \$15  
**Library Subs:** \$20/year  
(Member sub included in dues)

Published ten times per year  
printed by Teamsters union labor



Articles not so designated do not  
reflect the official position of the  
IWW. Contributions welcome.

Press Date: May 13, 2002



## IWW directory

### Australia

**IWW Regional Organising Committee**  
PO Box 241, Surry Hills 2010. email:  
roc@iww.org.au www.iww.org.au

**Melbourne GMB:** PO Box 145, Moreland  
VIC 3058. melbourne@iww.org.au

### New Zealand

PO Box 5407, Dunedin, Aotearoa (New  
Zealand). iwwgmbdunedin@e3.co.nz

### British Isles

**IWW Regional Organising Committee**  
PO Box 4414, Poole BH15 3YL,  
info@iww.org.uk. Membership application  
enquiries, phone Ray on 01202-257556.

**Brighton:** BrightonIWW@hotmail.com

**London IWW:** 0709-2016650.

**Pioneer Cooperative Retail Society Job  
Branch & General Distribution Workers IU  
660** c/o Regional Organising Committee.

**Swindon Region GMB & Research Councils  
IU 620:** Kevin Brandstatter, del., 9 Omdurman  
St., Swindon SN2 1HA. 01793-610707.

**Yorkshire IWW:** YorksIWW@hotmail.com,  
0771-5517094.

### Canada

#### Alberta

**Edmonton GMB:** PO Box 75175, T6E 6K1.  
iww-edm@iww.ca http://edmonton.iww.ca

#### British Columbia

**Vancouver IWW:** PO Box 4755, Stn. Terminal,  
V6B 4A4. 604-682-3269 x8493. email: gmb-  
van@iww.ca http://vancouver.iww.ca

**Victoria GMB:** PO Box 8283, V8W 3R9.  
250-360-9803 vicwob@hotmail.com

#### Manitoba

**Winnipeg GMB:** IWW, c/o WORC,  
PO Box 1, R3C 2G1.

#### Ontario

**Ottawa-Outaouais GMB:** Peter Timusk, Sec.,  
701-151 Parkdale Ave., K1Y 4V8. email:  
ptimusk@sympatico.ca french-language del:  
Mathieu Brûle parti\_hardware@yahoo.com  
**Peterborough IWW:** c/o PCAP, 393 Water St.  
Unit 17, K9H 3L7.

**Toronto GMB:** toronto.gmb@iww.ca

### Germany

**IWW c/o Barrikade,** Bismarckstrasse 41a,  
D-47 443 Moers. Daniel Zimmerman, del.,  
syndikat-a@fau.org

### United States

#### Arizona

**Phoenix GMB:** c/o Aaron, 1309 S Farmer Ln,  
Tempe 85281. aaron@iww.org 480-303-9580.

#### California

**Los Angeles GMB:** PO Box 91691, Pasadena  
91109. 626-644-1973.

**San Francisco Bay Area GMB:** PO Box 11412,  
Berkeley 94712. 415-863-WOBS. Meetings 2nd  
& 4th Thursdays at 7 p.m. (Call for location)

**Curbside and Buyback IU 670 Recycling  
Shops:** Bruce Valde, del., 510-652-9462.

**San Jose:** Adam Welch, del. pager: 408-795-  
9672 email: adam\_freedom@yahoo.com

**Santa Barbara GMB:** PO Box 23008, 93121.  
sbgmb@iww.org

#### Colorado

**Denver:** P&L Printing Job Shop: 2298 Clay,  
Denver 80211. 303-433-1852.

#### Hawaii

**Honolulu:** PO Box 11928, 96828. Mike Long,  
del., 808-396-1078 mlong@hawaii.edu

#### Illinois

**Chicago GMB:** c/o Gato Negro Press,  
PO Box 465, Evanston 60204. 847-733-7226.  
del: michaelhargis@netscape.net

#### Kansas

**Lawrence GMB:** PO Box 176, 66044.  
785-830-0120

#### Kentucky

**Louisville:** Ben Fletcher GMB,  
P. O. Box 1313, 40201.

#### Louisiana

**New Orleans GMB:** c/o Jeffrey Brite, 2513  
Carondelet St., 70130. jbrite@acadiacom.net

#### Maine

**Norumbega GMB:** PO Box 3343, Lewiston  
04243. Jim Ellsworth, del., 207-626-5388.  
jimells@mint.net

### Maryland

**Baltimore GMB:** 1621 Fleet St., 21231.  
bltgm@iww.org

### Massachusetts

**Boston Area GMB & Education Workers IU**  
620 Branch: PO Box 391724, Cambridge  
02139. Steve Kellerman, del., 617-469-5162.

### Michigan

**Detroit GMB:** 6135 Regular, 48209.  
810-321-7154.

**Grand Rapids GMB:** PO Box 6629, 49516.

### Minnesota

**Duluth GMB:** c/o Laverne Capan,  
1522 N 8th Ave E, 55805-1115.

**Minneapolis/St Paul GMB:** 1708 E 26th St,  
55404. Dels. Sam Adams 612-724-9158.

### Missouri

**St Louis:** P.O. Box 11551, 63105 Del. Richard  
Burke, 314-849-3530. burkemo@earthlink.net

### New York

**NYC GMB:** PO Box 7430, JAF Station, New  
York City 10116, iww-nyc@bari.iww.org

**Upstate NY GMB:** PO Box 74, Altamont  
12009. 518-861-5627. Rochelle Semel, del, 291  
Bristol Rd, Hartwick 13348. 607-293-6489.

### North Carolina

**New Bern:** Bruce Arnold, del.,  
1350 Trent Blvd #Q-4, 28560.

### Ohio

**Cincinnati:** Mark Damron, del  
PO Box 42233, 45242.

**Toledo GMB:** PO Box 20128, 43610 419-242-  
0563, UEIToledo@accesstoledo.com

### Oregon

**Lane County GMB:** PO Box 371, Eugene  
97401. iwwlu@efn.org 541-343-7828.

**Portland Industrial District Council:** union  
hall: 616 E. Burnside St., 503-231-5488.

**Portland GMB:** PO Box 15005, 97293-5005.  
pdx@iww.org 503-796-3474.

**Restaurant Workers Industrial Union 640  
Branch:** PO Box 15005, 97293-5005.  
503-231-5488.

**Public Service IU 650 Branch:** Bill Bradley,  
delegate, billbradleyiww@hotmail.com

503-236-6948.

### Pennsylvania

**Lancaster GMB:** PO Box 796, 17608

**Philadelphia GMB:** PO Box 42777, 19101.  
215-763-1274

**Paper Crane Press IU 450 Job Shop,**  
papercrane@erols.com, 610-358-9496.

**Pittsburgh:** Kenneth Miller, del, PO Box 99416,  
15213. pgh\_iww\_iu450@yahoo.com.

### Rhode Island

**Providence GMB:** PO Box 5795, 02903.  
401-861-9864.

### Texas

**Austin GMB:** PO Box 650011, 78765 .

512-467-7360 delgin@io.com

**Dallas:** Covington Hall GMB, 972-993-2020  
x1943. dallasiww@dallasiwws5.com  
http://www.dallasiwws5.com

### Utah

**Salt Lake City GMB:** PO Box 520835, 84152-  
0835. slcgmb@iww.org 801-485-1969.

### Vermont

**Montpelier:** Bob Heald, del, PO Box 1285,  
05601. 802-229-1719.

### Virginia

**Harrisonburg:** Mike Slaton, 645 Kyle St. 22801.

### Washington

**Industrial Transportation Project:** Arthur J  
Miller, PO Box 5464, Tacoma 98415-0464.

**Olympia GMB:** PO Box 2775, 98507.  
360-956-3713. olywobs@hotmail.com

**Seattle Industrial District Council:**  
5215 Ballard NW, 98107. bp172@scn.org

### Wisconsin

**Madison GMB:** P.O. Box 2442, 53703-2442.

**IU 450 Lakeside Press Job Shop:** 1334  
Williamson, Madison 53703. 608-255-1800.

**Railroad Workers IU 520:** Baltimore Red, del,  
PO Box 3010, Madison 53704.

baltimore@baltimore.com 773-255-5412..

**Education Workers IU 620 Job Shop:**  
UW Greens Infoshop, 31 University Square,  
Madison 53715. 608-262-9036.

**Milwaukee:** IWW, PO Box 07632, 53207.



## Around Our Union

**Portland:** One of the IWW members "laid off" by ACORN after demanding union recognition is back on the job, though ACORN continues to resist returning the others to work under acceptable conditions. Distribution Workers IU 660 is pressing unfair labor practice and recognition cases with the National Labor Relations Board. Education Workers IU 620 will be launching a new Industrial Organizing Committee, especially among campus food service workers.

**Pittsburgh:** IWW members in Pittsburgh applied for a General Membership Branch charter April 21, at a meeting held at the historic Pump House – site of one of the Homestead Strike battles. IWW General Secretary-Treasurer Alexis Buss attended to help the new branch get off on a sound footing.

**Wisconsin:** The Madison GMB invites Wobblies to join protesters at the annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, meeting June 14-18 behind police barricades in sessions sponsored by corporations such as Phillip Morris, DaimlerChrysler, American Family Insurance, and others. "The same corporate powers that are pushing economic globalization, militarization and privatization are fighting in our backyards for increased access to out local governments," notes the Madison branch newsletter. "and the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Madison looks to them like the perfect place to effortlessly extend this control." A coalition known as Creative People's Resistance plans to provide a fitting welcome to our rulers.

Madison Wobs were part of an intelligence squad that descended on the University of Wisconsin recruiting fair Feb. 26, giving the "cloak and dagger" types from agencies such as the FBI, INS, Federal Bureau of Prisons and several police departments a taste of their own medicine. After photographing the earphone-wearing suspects close-up and asking a barrage of intrusive questions, the squad disseminated information about various nefarious activities of the police apparatus.

The next day, the Milwaukee GMB joined a delegation that persuaded the city council to pass a resolution affirming their refusal to buy World Bank bonds. On St. Patrick's Day, Wobs joined Midwest Express flight attendants picketing the downtown Midwest Express Center to protest the airline's two-year stonewalling in contract negotiations.

## City of Cambridge to boycott World Bank bonds

In an historic decision, the Cambridge (Mass.) City Council has voted unanimously not to invest in World Bank Bonds until the Bank changes its destructive policies. The Boston Area General Membership Branch of the IWW is among the groups backing the Bankbusters campaign.

With this resolution, Cambridge becomes the seventh city in the United States to join the boycott, and the first in the Northeast. The resolution also called on the Massachusetts state legislature to join the boycott, further underscoring the condemnation of World Bank practices which have created deep poverty for millions and caused serious environmental damage with irresponsible development projects.

"The World Bank receives 80% of its funding from the sale of bonds," said Catherine Benedict of Bankbusters. "By refusing to invest in the World Bank, Cambridge and other cities and organizations are having a real material impact on the Bank."

Representatives of organizations including Carpenters Local 40, Centro Presente and the National Lawyers Guild spoke on the World Bank's impact on workers who lose jobs, on immigrants forced to flee poverty in their homelands, on the environment, and more. The resolution called on the bank to respect labor rights, stop promoting privatization, cancel all debts owed to it by impoverished nations, and stop the imposition of destructive economic policies.

## Peterborough May Day action a great success

BY PAUL BOCKING

Wednesday, May 1st, on what is traditionally known as the *real* labour day, 50 people gathered in downtown Peterborough, Ontario, for an action organized by our local IWW group.

We converged in a downtown park, singing well-known Wobbly songs like "Solidarity Forever" and "Dump the Bosses of Your Back." One Wobbly gave a brief history of May Day.

We then moved onto our city's main street, marching several blocks proudly carrying our new banner as well as one for the Peterborough Coalition Against Poverty, a local ally and also part of the Ontario Common Front.

Upon reaching the main intersection where we planned to hold our action, the group decided to march over to support a nearby picket line of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union which just ended its eight-week strike against the provincial government. Taking the quickest route, we marched right through the downtown mall and with flags waving chanted Solidarity Forever as we proceeded toward the picket line. The strikers were very happy to see us and sharing song sheets, we sang together "Solidarity" and "Dump the Bosses."

Later we returned to the downtown intersection, where we set up a large music circle, squeezegeeing and free food. We also made placards and signs, placing one saying "Junk Food and Junk Jobs" over a large McDonald's sign. More people moved off of the sidewalk, taking over a road lane while waving flags and signs to passing motorists and pedestrians. Before long, FWs John and Michelle arrived from Ottawa to join the action. Aside from one police SUV, protecting a public image-conscious police officer, there was very little interference.

All in all a great success, our group is now moving on to planning our next actions.



## Portland Wobs form IDC, open hall

BY X345757

The newly formed Portland Industrial District Council of the IWW opened its new union hall on May Day. It was quite a party, with 300 people in attendance throughout the evening. Members of all six local IWW branches attended, as well as guests from the Bay Area, Puget Sound and Lane County GMBs. Members of the SEIU, ILWU Local #5, AFSCME and a number of building trades unions also attended.

Sing-alongs were provided by the Joe Hillbillies, General Strike and a pick-up band of Mexican SEIU janitors. Short talks were given by Bill Bradley of the IWW and representatives of the Cross Border Labor Organizing Committee and SEIU janitors.

The hall, located at 616 E. Burnside St., in central Portland, is large enough to sit 100 people. Each IWW branch is staffing the hall for office hours. The phone is 503-231-5488.

The IDC, comprising of all Portland branches, was formed April 29. The IDC will take on many of the tasks now performed by the local General Membership Branch, which will focus on forming new Industrial Union Branches. The Portland IDC is the first IWW Council chartered since the 1930s.

Portland IWWs also formed a contingent

in the annual May Day march. 2,000 people marched through the North Park blocks and up West Burnside St. This year's theme was in defense of immigrant workers' rights.

## Wob among 35 arrested in UMass solidarity action

An IWW member was among 35 people arrested April 29 at the behest of University of Massachusetts Amherst administrators. The 35 also face internal sanctions, including suspensions of students and firings.

Fifteen activists had occupied the office of the vice chancellor for student affairs while another 100 picketed outside the administration building. Protesters were pressing the university to bargain with the 360-member resident assistants union, which overwhelmingly won a recognition election in March.

The administration refuses to honor the results, resulting in the filing of 13 unfair labor practice charges. The Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission is reviewing the charges; administrators say they will not bargain with the union regardless of its ruling.

Police moved in after the crowd had thinned, arresting those inside and prompting supporters to sit in the road, locking arms and blocking the way.

## Preamble to the IWW Constitution

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

## Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers' ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses' orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

**TO JOIN:** Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month's dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 13476, Philadelphia PA 19101.

Initiation is the same as one month's dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$1,000, dues are \$6 a month. If your monthly income is between \$1,000 - \$2,000, dues are \$12 a month. If your monthly income is over \$2,000 a month, dues are \$18 a month.

- ☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer
- ☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution
- ☐ I will study its principles and make myself acquainted with its purposes.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership includes a subscription to the Industrial Worker.





# Praise the Boss

when workbells chime  
for bits of overtime  
whose wars we love to fight  
for leech and parasite

by F.N. Brill

CFO Magazine is no longer handing out its coveted "Excellence Award." I know this is disappointing, but the award's sponsor, Arthur Anderson Accounting, has pulled out. Three years ago Enron CFO Andrew Fastow won. Two years ago, should-be indicted Tyco exec Mark Schwartz got the nod. Perhaps CFO means Creative Financial Officers.

★ ★ ★

According to a NY Times poll 21 percent of Chief Financial Officers admit they had "misrepresented (their) companies financial position with aggressive accounting procedures." The other 79% continue to misrepresent their companies' financial procedures.

★ ★ ★

I'm not one of them Fellow Workers who say nothing can come from voting. Perhaps only very little, like libraries and parks, but not nothing. Last night I was subjected to a group of local politicians meeting. Their vapidity reminded me of an old IWW song from Australia, some of which follows: Hey! Polly (to Yankee Doodle)

The politician prowls around, For workers' votes entreating;  
He claims to know the slickest way to give the boss a beating.  
chorus: Polly, we can't use you dear, to lead us into clover;  
This fight is ours and as for you, Clear out or get run over.  
He claims to be the bosses' foe, on workers' friendship doting,  
He says, "Don't fight while on the job, But do it all by voting. ..."

★ ★ ★

While I'm dissing purported political democracy, let me ask the following unthought-of question: Would a government sponsoring a vote-by-mail system be liable for mail fraud?

★ ★ ★

My daughter is some trouble-maker. Evidently her teacher asked the class for an example of a tragedy. One of the kids said a ship sinking would be a tragedy. "No," came the reply, "that would be a loss." Another boy asked, "Would a car crash where everybody died?" "No, James, that's a misfortune." Finally my daughter said, "If President Bush died, that would be a tragedy." "Right!" replied her teacher, "Can you explain why?" Her answer: "Because if President Bush died it would be neither a loss nor a misfortune."

★ ★ ★

"From the point of view of the economy, the sale of weapons is indistinguishable from the sale of food." Eduardo Galeano, *Upside Down*, a primer for the looking-glass world

★ ★ ★

Some dolt who happens to own an American football team called the Indianapolis Colts has learned some lessons from Lennon. No, not the Russian, we're talking the dead Beatle. Neighbors had complained about this dweeb flying his US\$6 million helicopter to the McMansion's private heliport. He told the *Indianapolis Star* that listening to John Lennon's song "Imagine" taught him to be more concerned about his neighbors' complaints about noise. "Lennon sang about people living in harmony, and that's the way it should be..."

This is all very nice, as far as it goes. But Lennon's lyrics probably don't seem to have gone very far in this cretin's consciousness. Lennon was talking about having no possessions and the harmony it would bring. So harmonize by giving up the private heliport, football team and McMansion, dude.

Such "Imagine" hypocrisy hasn't been seen since "Lady" Thatcher and her Tory party sang Lennon's anarchistic screed at a party conference. I remember seeing their banners vividly: "Ignorance is Strength!" "War is Peace!" "Imagine no possessions!"

Of course, I'm sure Mr. Lennon gave up that Dakota Apartment condo after he wrote his ode to equality.

★ ★ ★

Seen on a local restaurant tip jar: "Help the working poor!" Seen on a wall: "True, Crickets don't work. But ants don't sing." Seen in an e-mail: "There is a different country somewhere."

★ ★ ★

One definition of a capitalist is someone who has given up looking for honest work and is too insincere to join the Mob.

★ ★ ★

"I'll tell you the honest truth, Mr. Pratt. Honestly, I had nothing to do with that strike. I told you this the first time we met, when you told me what Shine had said about me, that — by pure chance! — a strike always broke out where I was working or where I had been working, even if I'd hardly had time to look around me. Well, I can't help that. It's not my fault if men get dissatisfied and want something better. I never say anything to such men. I keep mum, and let others do the talking. So it beats me, everywhere I go people say I'm a Wobbly, a troublemaker, and I assure you, Mr. Pratt, that this is —' 'The whole and unadulterated truth,' Mr. Pratt finished the sentence that I'd intended to finish quite differently." B. Traven, *The Cotton-Pickers*.

★ ★ ★

One of the delights of working nights has to be daytime television, particularly Jerry Springer. Of course, my interest is solely for sociological observation... Anyhow, there's this ad for a technical college which has more class consciousness than most anything else I've seen on TV. A guy comes on talking about working construction and "orange hardhats and white hardhats." The orange being the workers and white being engineers and supervisors. He wants us to take a class and get our white hardhats. But how he sells it is amazing. "I'm down in a hole doing all the work and the guy with the white hat gets all the money."

Sounds like we've got the beginning to a great IWW ad.

★ ★ ★

F.N. Brill is real, honest. But not real honest. Really. Honest. Serious. E-mail him small fish and he'll do tricks for you. Not those kind of tricks. Contact him at fnbrill@yahoo.com or c/o IWW, 616 E Burnside, Portland OR 97214 USA

## Millions of workers celebrate May Day

More than 1.5 million workers marched throughout France to celebrate International Workers Day and deliver a firm rebuke to the fascists. At least 600,000 workers marched in Paris, the streets packed with throngs of workers stretching for blocks in every direction.

In Teheran, 5,000 Iranian workers took to the streets to protest rising inflation, low salaries and temporary jobs. Among the demonstrators were clothing factory employees who had not been paid in 14 months.

In Indonesia thousands of workers took to the streets calling for May Day to be made a national holiday, higher minimum wages and a halt to cuts in subsidies for fuel and electricity demanded by the International Monetary Fund.

While "communist" China defiled May Day by giving four businessmen "Labour Medals," South Koreans honored the spirit of the day with tens of thousands of unionists vowing an "all-out struggle" for the rights of workers. In Japan, 670,000 workers joined demonstrations protesting wage cuts and massive layoffs.

### May Day in North America

IWW members played active roles in organizing May Day events across North America. In Edmonton, Canada, May Week extended to 10 days of films, poetry, music, theater, baseball, lunch-time concerts, labor

television, political discussions and commemorations.

In San Francisco, hundreds of marchers gathered in the Mission District, marching behind puppets depicting the Haymarket martyrs and banners proclaiming that "Capitalism is Not Eternal." En route, the marchers met up with a demonstration organized by immigrants who angrily demanded "Peace, housing and jobs" and delivered a pink slip to U.S. Senator Diane Feinstein (although police had barricaded the entrance to the building that houses her office).

After speeches on the struggles of low-wage workers, an inspirational hip hop performance, and the telling of the story of the Haymarket Affair by one of the puppets, the groups marched to the INS office where immigrant workers condemned INS harassment. A similar action took place across the Bay at the INS building in Oakland.

In Santa Cruz, Calif., Wobblies helped launch a labor film festival to celebrate May Day, with films ranging from classics like "Harlan County, USA" to more recent films such as "Labor Battles the WTO."

IWW member Ethan Miller sang the classic labor song "Lewiston Factory Girl" as part of the first May Day celebration in Lewiston, Maine, in many years. More than 50 people turned out to sing labor songs and hear speakers including a retiring International Paper worker, who spoke on the Jay

## British health workers fed up with promises

The following is excerpted from the debut issue of IWW Health Worker, a newsletter issued by the British IWW.

### Where's the change agenda?

Three years ago the government produced one of their many glossy booklets (at taxpayers' expense) called Agenda for Change. This set out proposals for new national NHS pay and conditions. Much was promised. Three years on and a deal still hasn't been reached. The unions are still promising one. Jam tomorrow they've been saying for the last three years. Latest news is that a deal might be reached at the end of the year. IWW Health Worker won't hold its breath — we've been told this before...

### Women workers get raw deal

The NHS is the biggest employer of women in Europe. Over six out of ten health workers are women. So what proportion of the NHS' top job, Trust bosses, are taken by women? Less than 20%! What about the next highest paying jobs — medical staff? Less than a third of doctors are women.

Don't worry though, there are some jobs where almost all the workers are women, like cleaning and laundry work. These are of course the lowest-paying jobs but we are sure that is just a coincidence!

### Labour ignores unions

Labour health boss Alan Milburn is a MSF (now Amicus following its merger with AEEU) member, but IWW Health Worker would like to know whether his subs are up to date. We are pretty sure he doesn't like talking to unions. He has pushed through without any negotiations performance pay (so-called team bonuses) and given extra money to qualified staff in London and the South East through Cost of Living Supplements. COLS aren't paid to the lowest earners like ancillary and admin staff, though, despite them suffering most from the high cost of living in places like London!

The national NHS Whitley negotiating councils haven't produced an agreement in years. One insider told IWW Health Worker

"they saw more action under the Tories."

But what are the unions doing? Good question. Milburn's contempt for collective bargaining is typical of New Labour. Sidelined and ignored unions like Unison have done absolutely nothing in response, too scared to take the government on.

### The NHS is in a mess

After seven years of New Labour, waiting lists are still huge. When in opposition, Labour accused the Tories of fiddling the figures. When in power they do the same. One patient, waiting for day surgery, told IWW Health Worker: "I had to wait two months to get a scan. That is one waiting list. I then had to wait four months to see a consultant. That's another waiting list. Now I have got to wait ten months for my operation. That's a third waiting list. Nearly a year and a half in total, but because I've been put on three separate waiting lists it looks less."

If things are bad for patients they're no better for health workers. An IWW member who is a hospital porter spells out the reality of working under New Labour: "After years of casualisation, staff cuts and a significant increase in workload we have a seriously demoralised workforce."

New Labour accuses health workers of being inefficient and resistant to change. "NHS workers, though, are slogging their guts out trying to provide the public with a decent service despite under-funding," another healthworker told us.

Labour has just one 'answer' to the 'problems' of the NHS — privatisation. IWW Health Worker is for health workers who have had enough and want to fight back.

### Time for One Big Union

Unison, T&G, Amicus, GMB, RCN, RCM, BMA, the list goes on and on. There are nearly twenty unions representing Britain's one million NHS workers.

Rather than uniting the workforce, all these unions divide and weaken them. Pay rates are crap which is why the NHS has such big problems recruiting and retaining workers, but the RCN (nurses) is happy if they





Hundreds of immigrants and other Boston workers joined a May Day rally, celebrating international workers' solidarity and demanding legalization for undocumented workers.

strike, and John McClendon, a professor of African-American studies at Bates College, who spoke on the struggle for medical care, housing and education.

"Let's talk about fighting the terrorism working people face every day when they decide whether they are going to heat or whether they are going to eat," McClendon said. "Workers of the world, unite. The only thing you have to lose are your chains."

In Madison, Wisconsin, May Day-related events included a May Day rally in front of the state capitol, a May 3 labor sing-along, a May 4 rally for civil liberties, and a May 5 picnic, alongside talks and films on international trade, war and the environment.

In Boston, a week-long Festival del Pueblo kicked off with a May Day morning march of 300 people through downtown Boston, followed by a day-long book fair and teach-in at Northeastern University. There were dozens of talks, concerts and film showings across the city.

The Massachusetts Legalization Coalition, of which the Boston IWW is a member, sponsored a May Day rally to demand legalization of undocumented workers. Hundreds of mostly immigrant workers turned out to hear speakers including immigrant activists, union officials and musicians, one of whom led the crowd in a tribute to Haymarket Martyrs George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Louis Lingg, Albert Parsons and August Spies, shouting ¡Presente! after each name.

Boston Wobblies carries banners calling for a world without bosses and a shorter work week at the May Day march and rally, and at a May 4 community march, and distributed more than 2,000 leaflets launching a campaign for a shorter work week at labor-related events throughout the city.

In Vancouver, protesters marched to a McDonald's restaurant where they blocked the entranceways for about an hour, while members of the Anti-Poverty Committee and

other groups spoke against the training wage and the history of McDonald's union-busting. Four people were later arrested after a group entered a shopping mall chanting "6 bucks sucks, 8 is not enough."

### Mayday in Sweden

Enthusiastic red and black banners flew across Sweden May Day, with nearly 8,000 people participating in demonstrations and contingents organized by the Central Organization of Swedish Workers (SAC), with which the IWW has long enjoyed close ties.

In Stockholm 2700 people joined rallies at the "La Mano" (the hand, a monument in memory of the Swedish volunteers killed fighting the fascist uprising in Spain civil war) and a march to Sergels Square

Ramiro Savaria, an activist from Bolivia, told about the struggle against privatization of water that have been waged in her country. Andreas Malm from the Syndicalist Youth Federation, who recently returned from peace work in Palestine, spoke on the massacres in Jenin. And Lars Hammarberg of SAC's Postal Syndicate advocated strengthening of union power worldwide as the best way to prevent companies from moving production elsewhere.

In Gothenburg, where police attacked demonstrators during protests against the European Union summit last year, 1,500 marched under the SAC banners. In Malmö, speakers pointed to the need to defend the public sector. In Karlstad the SAC marched under a banner reading: "for the liberation of the working class – against state, capital and patriarchy." The Joe Hill poem "Workers of the world, awaken!" was read by Klara Emmerfors from Skogshall LS.

### Australians defend refugees

In Australia police on horseback charged demonstrators after 500 people blockaded the offices of a company that runs prisons

dispute, and the Projectionists' top wage scale was knocked down from \$38/hr to \$15/hr. Now Famous Players has given workers a \$10/hr take-it-or-leave-it offer, and locked them out again.

Famous Players has given workers an offer they cannot possibly accept, as the goal is to get rid of the union once and for all, perhaps to take advantage of the new \$6/hr "training" wage that has been implemented by the B.C. government. The B.C. Projectionists are asking people not to patronize this despicable employer.

Letters of protest can be sent to Famous Players at [guestservices@famousplayers.ca](mailto:guestservices@famousplayers.ca), and messages of support can be sent to [gersnave@hotmail.com](mailto:gersnave@hotmail.com). For further information phone 604-685-0007.

### West Coast dock bosses threaten lock-out

The Pacific Maritime Association has threatened to lock out West Coast longshoremen if there are any work slowdowns this spring. Management claims that production slowed dramatically during the last contract negotiations three years ago. Now the bosses association is trying to shift a large share of the work to nonunionized, offsite workers.

# Die worker! Die!

BY MORGAN MILLER

In the heyday of robber-baron capitalism a mine owner placed more importance on the life of his work animals than the miners. The reason was simple, it cost money to replace animals, miners were free to be had.

A hundred years later and all around us capitalists tell us how the excesses of the past are gone. Employers now value their "most valuable resource," their employees. IWWs know it's all a line of b.s., but a lot of our coworkers don't.

So along comes an exposé which shows the capitalists for the parasites they are. The latest scam is called a Corporate-Owned Life Insurance, or what Winn-Dixie Grocery accountants called "dead peasant" insurance.

COLIs are a method in which a company gambles on their lowest-paid employees' life expectancy. Life insurance is taken out on workers for amounts ranging from \$60,000 to \$368,000. When the "peasant" dies money is shuffled into company coffers to benefit executives and high-level managers.

The benefits both to the company and exec.s are tax-free.

One example: a musician worked at a music store for a couple of months. He later died and the company benefited \$339,302,

for asylum seekers. At least 31 were arrested.

Other Australian cities saw May Day protests against the government's policies toward asylum seekers, in support of Palestinians, and more generalized actions against corporate globalization.

Malaysian police arrested 17 protesters leading workers to a rally in Kuala Lumpur, and then beat up workers as they tried to flee. Thousands of Filipino demonstrators were met by riot police who suggested they might be terrorists.

More than 500 pilots took to the streets of Hong Kong alongside Filipino maids demanding a minimum wage in a march protesting the widening wealth gap. Nearly 3,000 prostitutes from India, Bangladesh and Nepal marched in Calcutta, India, carrying colorful banners and flaming bamboo torches and demanding legal status and social secu-

of which \$168,875 was spent on executive benefits. Of course, the deceased – the valuable employees – and their families get little or nothing from the policies. In fact, often employee spouses and even children have COLIs taken out on them.

According to the *Houston Chronicle*, "This approach is used... to reward top executives with more than their 401(k) and the traditional defined pensions that are allowed by pension laws, which cap how much the company can contribute to the benefits."

For years it was illegal for companies to take COLIs out on average employees because it could discourage companies from making their workplaces safe. And possible cases of this type of corporate murder are turning up. In Texas, the National Convenience Store chain took out policies of \$250,000 on their peasants. So while a similar-sized competitor upgraded employee safety by installing bullet proof glass and bringing staff levels up to two workers at night, NCS did nothing. The competitor had one staff murder death in a five-year period. NCS had nine staff murder deaths in the same period, making a cool tax-free \$2.25 million for management's retirement funds.

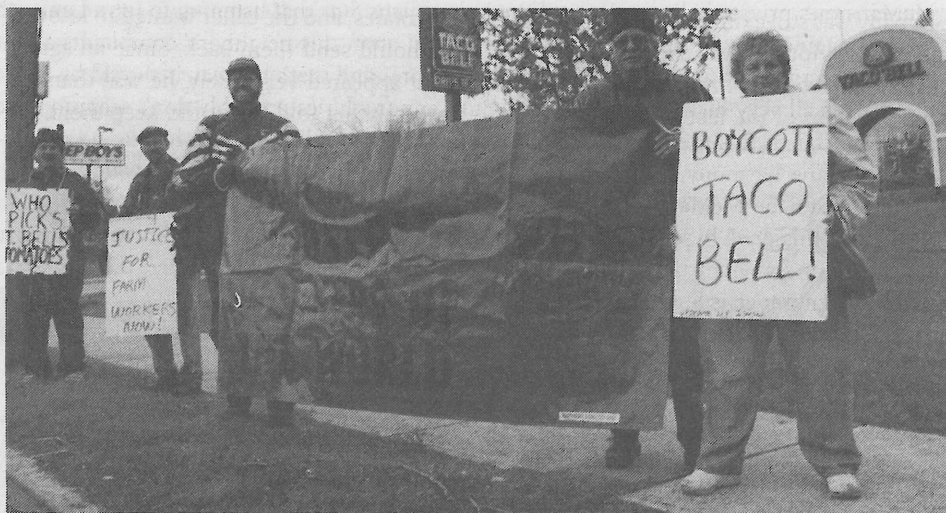
It's some system!

rity benefits.

Thousands of protesters joined May Day demonstrations in London under what Agence France Presse called "a stifling police presence." The TUC rallied in Trafalgar Square, while anti-globalization and other protests were held throughout the city.

In Italy, where unions are in a bitter fight with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's government, half a million people rallied against proposed reforms designed to make it easier to sack workers.

More than 75 demonstrations were held across Spain, where the centre-right government has proposed to slash unemployment benefits. Some 60,000 workers took part in a Madrid demonstration sponsored by unions that have threatened a general strike if the government pushes ahead with plans to slash unemployment benefits.



## Upstate NY Wobs Boycott the Bell

The Upstate New York Regional General Membership Branch was back out on the streets of Albany, N.Y., to support the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' boycott of Taco Bell's tomato products April 30. The IWW here has been conducting regular pickets at the fast food giant's Central Avenue restaurant, gaining more public support for farmworker justice. On this occasion, it became apparent that local Taco Bell management is getting impatient with our regular visits.

Shortly before the action was set to conclude, two Albany police squad cars rolled in the parking lot, and the two uniformed officers approached, seeking someone "in charge." Local Wobblies always confound the cops when responding to such queries. "We're all in charge," a local delegate said, a defiant smile on his face.

The police said they received a phoned-in complaint, apparently anonymous, that one of the picketers had thrown something

at a passing automobile. "I wouldn't think you would be that careless," the cop admitted, recognizing that the action was informational in nature. We agreed that someone inside probably made the call to attempt to discourage further action to promote the boycott. Little do they know!

The Upstate NY Wobs were called to duty May 1, appropriately for the working class holiday, in an educational forum at Vermont's Bennington College. FW Greg Giorgio lectured and chaired a discussion about May Day and the history of the IWW. Assisted by FWs Manley, Patti and Qanai, the branch enjoyed brisk sales at their lit table and the students were very attentive and asked good questions.

And Wobs here will conduct a branch fundraiser with a cultural night of poetry, music and FW Nick Patti's one-act play in early June. Other local artists will also participate in the benefit, designed to raise funds for a future home office for the branch.

## Famous Players locks out projectionists

BY GORDON FLETT

The members of the British Columbia Projectionists Union, IATSE Local 348, were locked out by Famous Players April 27. There are only 8 union projectionists left, one in Victoria and seven in the Lower Mainland area. In the last dispute there were 62 of them. The last time they were locked out, in December 1998, there was a bitter 16-month

get a bit more than Unison, who are happy if they get a bit more than the T&G. None of them want to take on the government.

NHS workers deserve better. IWW unites all health workers, whether they are porters or nurses. IWW does not believe in 'partnership,' not when NHS Trusts managers are getting pay rises three times as large as rank and file workers!

### U.S.-based Kaiser to help "privatize" UK healthcare

British "Labour" Health Secretary Alan Milburn has declared that he will used increased NHS funding to privatize more of the country's health care system. He is bringing in U.S.-based Kaiser Permanente and management consultants to help restructure the system along the widely reviled health maintenance organization model.



# Work kills more than 2 million each year

Over 5,000 people around the world die each day from work-related accidents or diseases, according to a special issue of the International Labour Organization magazine *Labour Education* published to coincide with the International Commemoration Day for Dead and Injured Workers April 28.

Contributors, who include union health and safety specialists and ILO experts, are unanimous in blaming negligence, violation of international standards, and abuses of labor rights as key factors in perpetuating the scourge of workplace deaths.

"Much of the suffering generated by poor health and safety has little to do with the level of development or the economic situation in a given country," the authors say. On the other hand, unionization of workplaces and dialogue between workers and employers are decisive factors in reducing risks at work.

"Accidents do not just occur, they are caused," says Jukka Takala, director of the ILO's program on health, safety and the environment.

With 55,000 deaths per year the construction sector remains dangerous, yet ag-

riculture now has the highest number of victims at work. Out of a total of 335,000 fatal workplace accidents, some 170,000 casualties are among workers in agriculture.

The presence of unions seriously reduces the number of accidents and health problems at work. One recent study found that in workplaces with full union recognition and a joint management-union safety committee, serious accident rates were less than half those at firms with no union recognition and no joint committee.

## U.S. safety efforts failing

Nearly 6,000 American workers were killed and more than 6.3 million suffered other injuries or illnesses on the job in 2000, the most recent year data was available from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Bush administration has proposed cutting \$9 million and 83 positions from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

In addition, the administration has proposed cutting \$28.3 million from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health budget, reducing it to \$258.3 million.

## Victory at Purdy's Chocolates

BY GORDON FLETT

In a stunning victory, the 100 workers at the Purdy's Chocolates production plant in Vancouver, B.C., ratified a collective agreement with the company April 16. The workers had struck April 30, 2001, but were decertified and had their strike declared over by the B.C. Labour Relations Board October 15 due to irregularities in the signing of union cards in the original organizing drive four years before.

The workers immediately filed for recertification, and a vote was taken but never counted as the Board then ordered another election since the company had hired 20 casual employees who were now eligible to vote. The workers still triumphed and were recertified with the Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union Of Canada, Local 2000, on February 5.

Negotiations started anew, but since the company was still exhibiting their usual anti-union behaviour, it was expected to be another tough round of resistance by Purdy's. Then, in light of the fact that a majority of

the working class of the province was still not buying their chocolates, the company suddenly insisted on hammering out an agreement with their workers. Good advances in wages, benefits and working conditions were achieved by this courageous workforce of mostly immigrant women.

Congratulations goes out to these workers who never gave up in spite of the many obstacles thrown in their path and the working class of British Columbia, who refused to patronize this employer until they had signed a fair agreement with their employees who create their wealth. Special thanks also goes out to the many supporters in Alberta, where Purdy's has stores, elsewhere in Canada, in the U.S., and worldwide.

The day before ratification, there was a call to the CEP Purdy's office from a person working at a company in Winnipeg. Someone had mail-ordered a bunch of Purdy's chocolates, and the caller wanted to know if he should send them back. Since an agreement appeared very likely, he was thanked profusely but told he should keep them.



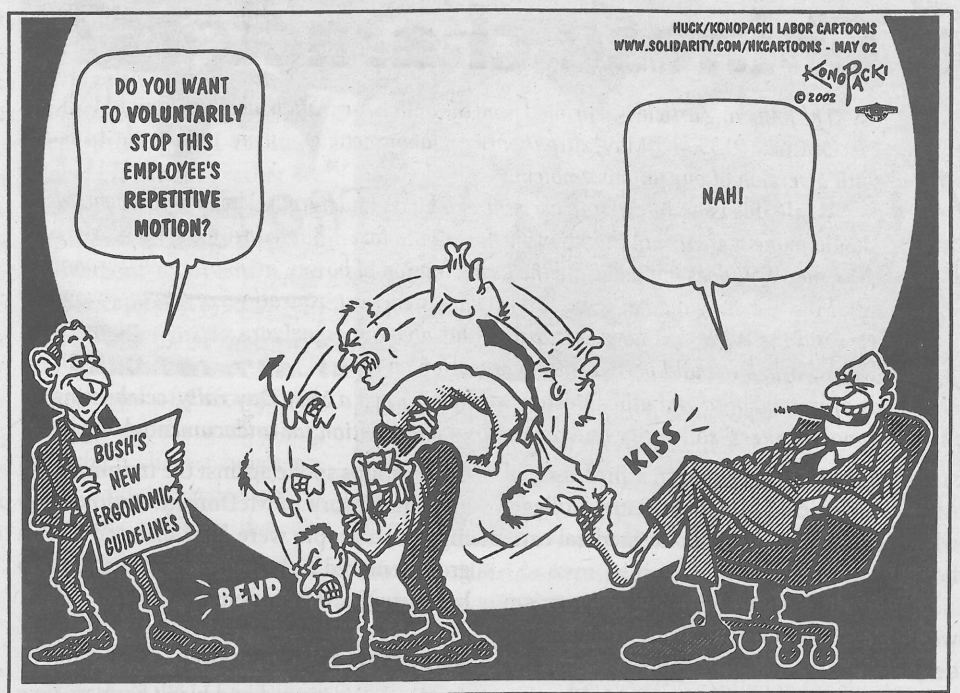
## Carpenters strike

Some 3,000 union carpenters walked off construction sites across Connecticut May 1, after overwhelmingly rejecting a contract that would limit union representation, subject workers to random drug testing, and make only a tiny dent in low wages resulting from years of concessions. Another 2,000 carpenters continue work under interim agreements.

While the carpenters set up picket lines at sites including the University of Connecticut and Bradley International Airport, few workers honored the lines. Other crafts con-

tinued work at most jobs, leaving the carpenters – typically employed at the beginning and end of jobs – to fight on their own. Some truck drivers refused to cross picket lines to make deliveries, but their numbers were so low that newspapers reported such instances as news.

The average Connecticut union carpenter earns less than \$35,000. Contractors were claiming they could afford to hold out for a year, if necessary, to break the strike – a boast that may well be true, unless the carpenters can persuade their fellow workers to stop the massive union scabbing that has characterized the strike thus far.



**News item:** Bush administration proposes voluntary ergonomics standard.

## UnStrike at Starbucks

On May 13, 140 Starbucks baristas and at 10 Starbucks outlets in Vancouver, British Columbia, members of Canadian Auto Workers Local 3000, began an UnStrike for Justice and Dignity.

"UnStrike?" What the heck is an "UnStrike?" you ask.

An UnStrike is legal under B.C. labour law. During the UnStrike workers will continue to work while engaging in a variety of activities that would not normally be tolerated by Starbucks, such as disregarding corporate dress code, displaying tattoos and piercings, dramatic hair colours and more.

Members will be handing leaflets to customers as they serve them, asking people to send Starbucks a message. Off the job workers will be customers at non-union Starbucks outlets, public events, and using the internet to help spread the campaign.

The UnStrike for Justice and Dignity is designed to attack Starbucks' corporate image as well as exercise economic pressure on the world's largest coffee corporation. The CAW is are unionists to cease purchasing at all Starbucks outlets except the 12 unionized units, for the duration of the UnStrike.

Despite its pretense of social responsibility, Starbucks has shown itself to be an anti-union employer. In current negotiations, Starbucks is refusing to bargain on even a single union proposal and is seeking to effectively eliminate the seniority provisions

achieved in the first two agreements.

Wage improvements achieved in previous agreements have immediately been given to all non-union stores in B.C. while management spreads lies that the only difference between union and non-union stores is the fact that union members pay union dues.

Starbucks management does not mention the fact that seniority is a key factor in scheduling hours of work, that employees in union stores are entitled to be scheduled for two consecutive days off rather than split days off, or that union stores have access to an effective grievance procedure. Starbucks' purpose is clear, to undermine the union's efforts to improve the lives of Starbucks employees in order to maintain low wages and exceptionally high profits.

Starbucks was recently forced to settle a major class action lawsuit for US\$18 million for shortchanging California Store Managers and Assistant Store Managers on overtime payments.

To send Starbucks a message write: Howard Schultz, Chairman & Chief Global Strategist, Starbucks Corporation, 2401 Utah Avenue South, Seattle WA 98134 or email [hschultz@starbucks.com](mailto:hschultz@starbucks.com) and tell him you expect Starbucks to bargain honestly for a fair contract for CAW Starbucks UnStrikers.

Please copy Orin Smith, Starbucks CEO at [osmith@Starbucks.com](mailto:osmith@Starbucks.com) and the CAW UnStrikers at [Starbucks@caw.ca](mailto:Starbucks@caw.ca).

## Hershey workers sense the "smell of solidarity"

While Hershey's January-March profits were up 10 percent this year, today no profits are being made at Hershey's flagship plant in Hershey, Pennsylvania, which accounts for nearly a third of the company's production.

Some 2,800 workers struck in April after months of working without a contract. Pickets and placards reading "Stop the Greed, Share the Wealth" line the factory gates along Old West Chocolate Avenue.

Chocolate Avenue intersects with Cocoa Avenue in a town of about 12,000, where the smell of chocolate fills the air and street lights are topped with Hershey kisses. The town, billed as the "Sweetest Place on Earth" on its Web site, was founded by Milton Hershey for workers at the plant he built in 1905.

Workers say the factory had a "family atmosphere" until Hershey brought in a new CEO last year with a mandate to double profitability. Richard Lenny, a former Nabisco executive, has eliminated 800 jobs while pulling in a compensation package estimated at \$22 million in salary, stock options and bonuses. Now he is demanding workers accept a four-year contract that would double

health care deductions, wiping out the modest pay hikes the company has agreed to.

While Wall Street is delighted, Hershey residents are outraged. The gas station refuses to sell Hershey bars and local doctors give strikers their services free. Chocolate Local 464 president Bruce Hummel says, "The smell of solidarity is stronger than the smell of chocolate."

Pickets hand out free M&Ms to passers-by – "manufactured by Mars."

Talks resumed May 16, after three weeks on picket lines. If managers hold to their current hard line, workers are preparing to picket nearby Hersheypark, owned by sister company, Hershey Entertainment and Resorts Co. Summer is the big tourist season for the amusement park.

"This company's making money hand over fist and there's no reason it can't be shared," said Frankleen Gibson, a laborer who tends air conditioning units in the plant. "We're ready and we're going to stand tough."

**The longer the picket line,  
the shorter the strike.**



# Wobblies with Chinese characters?

The following article is reprinted from the online Australian labor magazine Workers Online (#135, 10 May; <http://workers.labor.net.au>), where it was illustrated with a version of our union's emblem.

While this is an interesting account of China's underground labor movement, we should make it clear that that movement is not in fact affiliated with the IWW. Moreover, the IWW does not advocate the assassination of bosses, no matter how tyrannical; Mao Tse-Tung did not in our view embody the just aspirations of Chinese workers; and the IWW was never made up of hit-and-run organizers, rather we have always worked to build permanent organization on the job. [ed.]

BY ANDREW CASEY

Workers in China's industrial heartland have started killing their bosses as a form of labour protest.

This industrial tactic has become so popular that children in the grimy polluted industrial cities of northeast China are playing a popular new game, Kill the Boss, where they re-enact the death of a factory boss pretending to stab and throttle each other.

At a state-owned tool factory managers this year found themselves locked in their offices, goaded and starved, and fearing they would be the next to die at the hands of worker militants.

This time the workers strung up not their bosses, but a banner across the factory gate.

Outside the bosses' offices they protested privatisation plans with their banner demanding: Sell your houses and limousines, give us the means to live – where have all the state assets gone?

The killings, the goading, the starving of bosses and the protests are not the result of a revival of the Red Guards.

Mao Ze Dong has not been resurrected. There is no state support for these angry, sometimes violent outbreaks. But there is evidence that at least some of this anger is organised and directed by the sprouting of what can only be characterised as a Chinese version of the old Wobbly movement.

There have been several reports of freelance labour organisers jumping the rails, catching trains from working-class town to working-class town offering to help disgruntled workers organise themselves into independent unions.

In central China, once the cradle of Maoist heavy industry, these Wobblies with Chinese characters are meeting receptive ears with mass protests, which almost always include a demand to be able to organise free autonomous workers organisations.

While these independent workers struggles flare up, glow, have a grass-fire like effect – firing up working people with the hope of change – heavy-handed tactics by local police quickly douses the power that the workers feel.

None of these flare ups have yet been able to cross the threshold to organise and maintain, for a long period, a permanent autonomous, independent union.

But the kids' popular game of Kill the Boss and the parents' actual murdering of their factory bosses – it seems – has not yet worked to warn the leadership of the official trade unions that there is trouble ahead.

In a breath-taking example of how out of touch are the fat-headed cadres in the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, four entrepreneurs were handed May Day 'Labour Medals' this year and, again on May Day, 17 businessmen were named 'model workers.'

"This is a breakthrough," said Li Qisheng, vice-chairman of the All China Federation of Trade Unions on May Day, commenting about the 'worker awards' to the boss class.

"Those entrepreneurs, who operate legally and work honestly, are also contributors to socialist construction. The awards have to keep pace with time and tide."

While the state-run union leaderships praise the new rich as the party's new role models, the Wobblies with Chinese characters are able to hide out among the angry workers who are looking for leadership and a way to effectively strike back at the cor-

rupt boss class who are now stripping state assets to line their own pockets – hiding behind the slogans of 'reform.'

What the Communist Party cadres are now worried about is that while the Wobblies with Chinese characters have, to date, only been able to start grass-fires, these first



*We will never back down  
enabling the slaughter  
to grow so tall and vast  
that they shut out  
the wind of freedom...*

Left: Banner at the Workers Autonomous Federation headquarters in Tiananmen Square. Text is from a poem by Bei Dao.

Reprinted from A Moment of Truth: Workers' Participation in China's 1989 Democracy Movement and the Emergence of Independent Unions. Asia Monitor Resource Center.

spluttering flames may eventually take hold and become a real bushfire burning down the whole Beijing apparatus.

In March this year CNN quoted "a source close to security" that the Beijing leadership was worried that an underground labour organisation had been established and was spreading.

The CNN story said the Chinese leadership had issued strict orders to target the underground organisers, with the paramilitary People's Armed Police told to break up disputes as they crop up.

These freelance organisers are rapidly gaining support with stories spreading word-of-mouth about their heroic activities.

Where did the Chinese Wobblies come from?

No one really has a fix on who these Wobblies are, though there a few theories.

The main theory is that the Wobblies with Chinese characters are 'rogue elements' who participated in workers struggles during the 1989 Democracy Movement, or were from what was once seen as the reform-wing of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions.

The reformers had given support to the workers and students during the 1989 Democracy Movement. But the reform wing of the ACFTU was quickly purged after the Democracy Movement collapsed.

Popular understanding of the 1989 Democracy Movement, in the Western world, has it as a student-only affair. In fact on June 4, 1989, most of those killed by the army in the streets and suburbs of Beijing were workers who supported the democracy struggle.

At this time, there were several attempts to organise independent autonomous workers federations in the factories of China with workers demanding "shop-floor democracy."

More than a decade later it is these former workers, and student activists, in the Democracy Movement who are seen as being the most likely source for this home-grown Wobbly movement.

Most of the sketchy reports in the West talk of these freelance labour organisers as not being young people straight out of universities.

They are reported as being well-educated activists, in their late 30s and 40s, with con-

tacts in Beijing and other big cities, and some experience in organising protests – and experience in disappearing before the police arrive to arrest them.

There have been enough different reports of these people to lend credence to the stories of their existence.

And the myth-building has started telling of the way they travel by train from town to town, going to wherever they hear of workers' disputes and offering a helping hand.

In the first five months of this year a massive wave of industrial unrest has spread through large swathes of China.

This year there has been hardly a week go by without reports of labour unrest – demonstrations demanding pensions; a railway line blocked by angry, unpaid workers or attempts to bring collective legal action against employers forcing overtime or demanding body searches of workers as they come and

*We will never back down  
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Left: Banner at the Workers Autonomous Federation headquarters in Tiananmen Square. Text is from a poem by Bei Dao.

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go from the factory.

The fact that even the tightly controlled state media is reporting some of these disputes indicates how widespread, even common, are the protests and strikes which are technically illegal.

Han Dongfang, an exiled labour organiser who spent time in jail for organising independent unions during the Democracy Movement period, says the working class anger shown in the disputes this year has led to what has probably been the largest protests over labour issues since 1949 – the year the Communists took power.

Some of the biggest disputes have been in the 'rustbelt' provinces where industrial monoliths are being shut down and hundreds and thousands of workers being put out of

work. In these places the officials of the old state-unions are being spat on and beaten up because for years they have taken the workers' money and now refuse to do anything to represent the workers' interests.

Often these union officials are suspected of being partners in the corruption, pocketing bribes or sharing in the profits of state-asset stripping.

But a lot of the industrial turmoil in the coastal provinces, in the new investment factories, is fed by the arrival of arrogant foreign capital who are rapidly turning back the clock on worker rights.

In these factories workers are being forced to work longer and longer hours, in increasingly unsafe workplaces and for measly wages, without the protection of any real unions.

The exploitation is especially pronounced at companies owned by Asian capital – especially Korean and Taiwanese factories producing toys and cheap goods for the consumer markets of the USA, Europe and Australia.

It is into this environment that the Wobblies with Chinese characters have moved.

There have been a few examples of these freelance labour organisers succeeding in linking myriad disputes to get one group of workers to provide solidarity and support to another group fighting the apparatus of the state. But to date these examples are few and far between.

The Chinese workers are fighting – and the Wobblies are providing support for these fights.

The Wobblies with Chinese characters may yet succeed in firmly linking a number of disputes to create the basis of a free, independent and democratic union structure.

A web site commemorating Chinese workers' role in the democracy movement can be found at: [www.workersremember.org/](http://www.workersremember.org/)

The China Labour Bulletin offers regular reports of industrial actions inside China: <http://iso.china-labour.org.hk/iso/>

## Protests demand release of Liaoyang labor activists

Several hundred workers have staged fresh protests in China's northeastern city of Liaoyang, gathering outside city government offices to call for the release of four labour leaders arrested in March.

The four had led protests by thousands of workers demanding months of unpaid wages, pensions and unemployment benefits. They have been charged with illegal assembly and are expected to go on trial soon.

## New age exploitation

When Hilario Rivera was recruited to pick fruit for Willamette River Organics, one of Oregon's biggest organic farms, he was forced to buy his work tools and pay \$4 a day for a bunk. Yet he was given only two hours of work on some days and none on others. When he did work, Rivera says, the camp supervisor threatened to fire anyone who asked for a break and cheated workers by undercounting bushels. He is among 34 workers suing the camp and Willamette for violating minimum wage laws.

Willamette, which settled a similar lawsuit in 1997, denies the charges. "I give these men jobs, but people think that because you have an organic field that the workers should all be sitting around in lounge chairs," Greg Pile, vice president of Willamette River Organics, told U.S. News & World Report.

At a sprawling organic vineyard in Arizona, a state Labor Department memo cited a host of "credible" allegations of filthy living conditions, young children working in the fields, and supervisors threatening to shoot workers who complained.

While consumers pay a high retail markup for organic food, the distributors and supermarket chains pay little more to farmers than what it costs to produce. And federal guidelines define organic food simply as

food not grown with pesticides; the guidelines say nothing substantive about labor.

Although organic growers, pickers and packagers are spared the exposure to toxic pesticides they would endure on regular farms, they often toil in dangerous, unsanitary conditions for wages that don't approach the legal minimum. "Just because you're buying organic doesn't mean the labor practices are any better at all," says former legal aid attorney Gary Restaino.

Consumers, who pay up to 50 percent more for organic fruits and vegetables, might expect otherwise, their perceptions fed by an \$8 billion-a-year industry that touts the organic label as a life-style that transcends mere food. Horizon Organic tells consumers it treats its cows with "respect and dignity"; while Whole Foods Market touts organic agriculture as the best method for "protecting the environment and the farmworkers." However, Whole Foods opposes efforts to establish fair labor standards.

After California banned short-handled hoes as dangerous to workers' backs, some organic farmers sent laborers out with no tools at all, forcing them to hunch over for hours in the baking sun. Long hoes would allow workers to stand upright, but some farmers believe these tools can damage crops.



# Fight for a shorter work week...

continued from page 1

every 25 to 30 years. Where did that increased productivity go? Far from living better, average wages (adjusted for inflation) are about the same as they were 25 years ago — a statistic that masks the fact that a handful of workers are doing much better, while most have seen their wages actually fall. And we're not putting fewer hours in on the job either; in fact, we're working longer and harder.

And in the current economic recession — which the newspapers are desperately trying to persuade us is an economic recovery — the situation is getting worse, Bekken said. Since November, average weekly overtime in manufacturing has increased even as employers slashed 38,000 jobs. Workers at companies that have laid off thousands of workers

are now pressured to put in up to 20 hours a week of overtime. Even eliminating overtime would create over a half-million jobs, Bekken noted, most of it in the very industries where unemployment is highest.

Gary Zabel, co-chair of the Boston Coalition Of Contingent Academic Labor (which organizes "part-time" and temporary faculty), discussed the implementation of the 35-hour week in France as an example of the pitfalls of trying to reduce working hours within the constraints of the present economic system. While employers were forced to accept demands for shorter hours, they were able to reshape the legislation to permit employers to speed up the pace of work and make workers put in up to 44 hours a week during busy periods without overtime

premiums (to be made up later during slack periods). "We can not meaningfully reduce work time if we accept the logic of capital," Zabel concluded; rather we need to "instill the habit of resistance" and build a movement to overturn the entire capitalist system.

Zabel's remarks touched off a discussion over the effectiveness of European efforts to cut the work week, in which shorter hours activist Anders Hayden argued from the audience that despite serious problems with the implementation of shorter hours, surveys had found that French workers believe their "quality of life" has improved with the 35-hour week, though few believe their life on the job has improved.

Several comments pointed to the need to pay close attention to the reality of work life on the job. Many "part-time" workers are actually working two or three jobs — putting in 60 or 80 hours a week on the job, even though they show up in official statistics working 20 or 30 hours. Almeida noted that many Brazilian immigrants find themselves working much longer hours in the United States than they did at home. In Brazil, kitchen workers work no more than 44 hours a week; in the U.S. it is not uncommon to find kitchen workers putting in up to 80 hours a week.

Almeida also urged the audience to press the government to extend the 245i visa program, allowing undocumented workers to legalize their status. This is necessary to enable these workers to fight for rights that Brazilians take for granted (such as shorter hours, unlimited unemployment compensation and three months' paid maternity leave) but are not available to workers in the United States, Almeida said. After the program, a Brazilian woman noted that the large numbers of workers in the informal sector are excluded from many of these benefits.

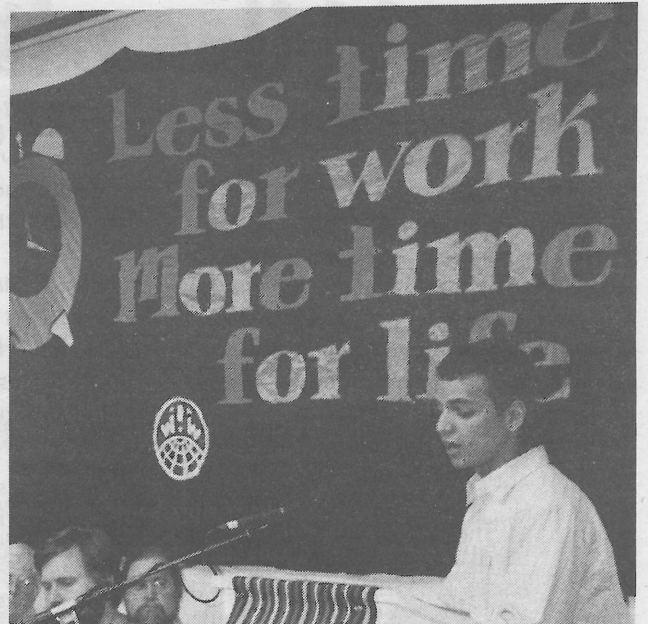
Brazilian Immigrant Center Executive Director Fausto Mendes da Rocha pointed to the intense pace of work in the United States. Brazilian workers have lost ground in recent years as a result of privatization and economic "reforms," he said. International solidarity will be needed to turn back "the American model" of relentless toil on the job and make possible an effective fight for shorter hours.

The fight for shorter hours is an issue that manifests in many different ways, from mandatory overtime to jobs with no fixed hours where often relatively well-paid workers are expected to work 60 or more hours a week. On the higher end of the pay scale, U.S. airline pilots can be required to work 16-hour shifts, while medical doctors are sometimes required to put in 36- or 48-hour shifts. For full-time workers, 10- and 12-hour shifts are increasingly common.

Workers' bodies are collapsing under these brutal labor regimes, with 1.8 million workers a year contracting repetitive strain injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

Meanwhile, one in ten U.S. workers is unemployed or underemployed. Wages remain stagnant, and benefits are under increasing attack. And crackdowns on immigrants and welfare recipients threaten to pull many more workers through the collapsing social safety net.

"Welfare has always been linked to work," Mandell noted, helping to maintain a reserve army of potential workers. When employers want to bring down wages they slash welfare benefits, forcing women to scramble for any job they can find. Even as unemployment is skyrocketing, a new Bush administration proposal would require welfare recipients to put in 40 hours a week of



Marconi Almeida stressed the need for all workers to come together to win a shorter work week and other benefits.

unpaid workfare labor.

A successful campaign for shorter hours could reduce unemployment, create safer workplaces by reducing fatigue, strengthen our communities, and, most importantly, enable us to reclaim our lives. "Our time is our life," Bekken noted. "The time we spend at work is not our own, and far too much of it is squandered on useless production, the support of parasites, the construction of the means of our annihilation, and so forth."

While attendance at the May 11 forum was modest (many more people attended a May Day presentation on the IWW's fight for the four hour day), the Boston Area General Membership Branch has established contact with several local organizations interested in the issue, and is working to build a broad-based coalition of environmental, feminist immigrant, welfare rights and labor organizations to press the fight for shorter hours.

Wobblies in other parts of the country have also begun working around this issue, and we hope to see a discussion at the 2002 General Assembly about ways we can coordinate efforts to build a truly international struggle for a shorter work week.

## Tech jobs plummet

The number of U.S. technology workers plunged by nearly 530,000 in the past year, a drop of nearly 5 percent, according to a study by the Information Technology Association of America. "It's been a game of musical job chairs," said ITAA President Harris Miller. "When the music stopped, several thousand people were left without jobs."

A separate study released by *Information Week* found that tech workers' pay had dropped by 11 percent over the last year.

While the U.S. Department of Labor continues to project that computer software engineers, systems analysts and support staff will be the fastest-growing job sectors in the next ten years, few reports address the reality of long, grueling hours at firms which pretend they are exempt from overtime laws; repetitive stress injuries; and soaring unemployment particularly among older workers.

## Workers pensions shorted

The corporate trend away from traditional defined-benefit pension plans could be shortchanging workers by more than \$200 million in benefits every year, according to the U.S. Labor Department.

Almost a quarter of the companies converting to the new cash-balance plans were found to be underpaying people who left before normal retirement age.

The Labor Department inspector general's office estimated that the amounts underpaid ranged up to \$55,629. The conversions have affected 8 million workers and involve \$334 billion in pension assets.

In cash-balance plans the company pays a fixed percentage of workers' annual salaries into retirement funds each year.

Hundreds of firms have involuntarily transferred workers from defined-benefit to cash-balance plans in recent years.



It seems there is some new legislation called the USA Patriot Act where booksellers and librarians must allow the FBI to investigate the reading choices of anyone, citizens or non-citizens alike, who may be suspected of indulging in terrorist activities, according to an article by Nat Hentoff in *Editor & Publisher*. Furthermore, they are not allowed to let on that any such investigation has taken place. At least three such investigations have already taken place.

The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression and the American Library Association have informed their members that they are entitled to lawyers if they are subject to such an investigation. But when members contact their organizations, they can not disclose any such visit by the FBI. All the bookseller or librarian can say is, "We need to contact your legal counsel!"

It has been a long-standing practice of those who manipulate us to instill in us manipulated a feeling of paranoia, but because such investigations are secret, it appears that our manipulators are already as paranoid as they would like us to be.

But leave us venture from the ridiculous to the sublime.

The other month I was invited down to the erstwhile steel mill district in Indiana to a reading by some steelworkers who had just published an anthology of their writings. This anthology consisted mainly of short stories and poetry. They had previously taken a writing workshop under Jimmy Santiago Baca of Mexican and Apache heritage, one of our noted Chicano writers.

Those who were there read from their own work, drawn from their experiences in the steel mills. One story of a first day working in a mill and at the end of the day swearing to find another means of work ended with the author noting that was 35 years ago and he was still in the mills. If a worker is unfortunate enough to fall in a vat of molten metal they disappear without a trace, and instead of being taken to the undertaker an ingot from that batch is placed in the coffin at the funeral — a not infrequent occurrence. One such story was about a young worker about to be married, but had to work right up to his wedding day; the day before, he fell into a vat. His coworkers contemplated whether they should take an ingot to his bride-to-be on the wedding day.

There is also the sad story of the worker who did not show up for his last shift before retirement, who had planned on finally seeing the country on his retirement money. His coworkers were quite concerned, as he had always showed up and they were planning a send-off at the end of the shift. They later learned that he had died in a head-on collision with a drunken driver who had crossed over from the opposite lane.

In another story, one of the steel workers was expecting his first baby and some of his fellow workers were down at the hospital with him — causing his wife and relatives no small amount of consternation at seeing a rough-and-tumble bunch of factory stiffies in those pristine confines. The gang subsequently adopted the child as a niece, even through a serious illness, and the wife eventually came to love them and accept them as unofficial godparents.

There was some real heavy stuff among these readings, and your scribe was quite moved. They invited me to read some of my stuff, prompting me to say that I felt that I was in damn good company. I told them that they are the retort to all those cultural snobs and elitists who try to tell the rest of us that there is no creative talent among ordinary working stiffies.

This is but another strong argument for the 4-hour day. Clock-punchers will have the opportunity to develop the innate creative ability that exists in all of us and give the lie to those snobs who say that workers would not know what to do with too much time on their hands.

While this column is not in the book review section, this is a book that can be enthusiastically recommended for any worker's library. The title is *The Heat: Steelworker Lives & Legends* (Cedar Hill Publications, 3722 Hwy 8 West, Mena AR; \$15 paper). There are also stories by women steelworkers, of whom there are many but who were unfortunately not at the reading, who present some of the problems of women having to work among men, especially from male supervisors.

Four hours work for eight hours pay puts more workers on the job every day. What to do about the bosses? It would do them good to put their butts behind a machine or a pick and shovel, and if they don't like it they can always find an office window to jump out of.

— C.C. Redcloud



# Direct action beats International Paper...

continued from page 1

gan circulating calling workers to a "stop-work" meeting. IWW-inspired pictures, tactics and union bulletins flooded the site.

This was to be no ordinary union meeting; the meeting itself was the direct action. Instead of going on strike, allowing the company to lock the workers out and starve them back, the call was for one-hour stop-works each side of shift change.

Losing one hour's production per shift wouldn't hurt the company, but with workers from all sections attending at the same time the dryer/boiler plant had to be completely shut down to allow the operators to attend the meeting without causing a safety risk. That requires hours of gradual shut-down, resulting in loss of energy for the production press lines. To re-start after the meeting requires hours of gradual firing until the oil is back at full temperature.

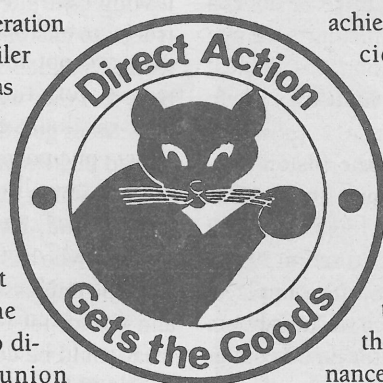
The site manager and his goons had been running around trying to stop workers from coming to the meeting. The company tried to stop us from entering the site by sending a couple of junior lackeys to the gatehouse to tell us we couldn't come on site. We barged into the air-conditioned site office (all five of us) and demanded to know who was going to kick us off site.

The members rose to the challenge. We had already been all over the site and received endorsement from members to begin the shutdown. Two workers per shift had the

power to shut the whole operation down. We lobbed in the boiler control room and watched as the temperature reading kept falling. By now the bosses had given up trying to stop the meeting.

At the union meetings the mood was defiant. I felt inspired as I watched the same workers who used to direct their anger at union organisers and fellow workers grow in confidence when the meeting started and the site was deadly quiet. The site manager showed up to order all workers off-site or we would be charged with trespass if we held the meeting in the site canteen. He also locked the door. We politely told him to call the cops (well maybe not politely) and filed into "our" canteen.

The usual one or two company stooges tried to turn the meeting against the organisers by saying we were misleading the workers about the company's intentions. Before we could get a word in, other workers reminded these stooges that the company had hung them out to dry for 10 months and just because they were happy to cop a shitty agreement didn't mean the rest of them would. I spoke about solidarity and that the power in the dispute rested with the members, they had all the power they needed to beat the company and the meeting itself was



achieving that. They would decide when and how they would fight and when they had won. It was agreed unanimously (minus the 2 stooges) to hold weekly "stop-work" meetings until the dispute was won. No overtime would be worked and there was a ban on maintenance.

Four one-hour meetings over two days (to capture all shifts) resulted in hours of lost production, costing the company at least \$50,000, while workers were only away from their job for an hour at a time.

CHH responded by seeking certificates from the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) which would allow them to sue the union, individual officials and members for economic damages. This was because their lawyers found a technical legal flaw in our EBA bargaining period, meaning all industrial action so far was "unprotected." They also docked each workers' pay by up to 5 hours (instead of the expected 1 hour), claiming that was how long it took each shift to get back to normal operations.

CHH got their certificates when the AIRC hearing was held without the union being present. They "accidentally" had faxed the notice to the wrong part of the CFMEU.

We were all set to be dragged off to the NSW Supreme Court and the Federal Court,

accused of conspiracy to injure the business, occupying part of the premises, inducing breaches of employment contracts, and the funniest one – interfering with the company's quiet enjoyment of its premises. That made me laugh, I'd never heard the site so quiet as when it was shut down!

As it turned out we got the support of the AIRC on appeal and the company was forced back into negotiations. With more spontaneous action looming, the bosses realised the game was up and agreed to parity with the other sites. The workers won a 6% payrise, smoking areas, paid leave for road closures (e.g. fire, flooding and snow), payment for emergency services work (e.g. bush fire duties), back pay and symbolically payment for the 5 hours pay that were docked after the industrial action.

This proves that only direct action gets the goods. The AIRC helped resolve the dispute only because we had got the company by the balls. The workers were prepared to fight a guerrilla campaign until they won. CHH will be back for more, here or elsewhere, but we beat them once and we can do it again.

Militancy is on the rise in Tumut and with any luck, timber workers can proudly take their place in the worldwide struggle against the multinationals. Street protests are great, but nothing hurts the boss more than a kick up the arse on the job. As the leaflets argued, "The boss needs you, you don't need the boss."



## Protest hits Coke

Hundreds of union members and human rights activists rallied outside Coca Cola's annual shareholders meeting in New York City April 17 to demand justice for Coca Cola workers around the world.

Union members from Coke plants in Colombia, Guatemala, the Philippines, Zimbabwe and Florida spoke about the abuses Coca Cola workers face every day on the job. Luis Javier Correa, president of SINALTRAINAL, the Colombian union of beverage and food workers, said death squads hired by the company executed a union supporter inside a Coca Cola plant. "They said this is what will happen to anyone who does not resign from the union," Correa told the crowd.

Seven Coca Cola workers have been brutally assaulted and murdered during union negotiations in Colombia.

In the late 1970s, several Coca Cola bottling workers and union leaders were assassinated in Guatemala. The terror continued until international pressure forced Coke to bring its local bottler to heel. However, conditions in Guatemala are deteriorating today, and Coke has turned over bottling operations to the same company they use in Colombia.

In the United States, workers who produce Coke's Minute Maid juices endure intimidation, retaliation and harassment.

Coke policy is to ignore reports of brutal violations of workers' rights at its bottling and distribution facilities around the world, acting only when compelled by international pressure. Now activists are pressing Coca Cola to accept an international code of conduct that respects workers' rights and lives.

## Argentine unionist murdered

Nestor Herrera, a teacher and union activist in the northern area of Rivadavia Comodoro, Argentina, was found with his throat cut during the night of 1st May. Next to the corpse was his cat, also found with its throat cut. Nestor Herrera was a member of the Commission of teachers leading a strike in that area.

## Police beat unionist

When Colombian unionists took to the streets May 1 to celebrate International Workers Day, marchers saw suspicious figures filming and taking photographs. When they notified police, instead of apprehending the suspects, police attacked the marchers, injuring several. By the end of the day, Jesus Gonzalez of the CUT (Central Unified Workers' Union) was in hospital with serious head wounds.

## Teamsters rediscover planet

Fresh off its unsuccessful alliance with the Bush administration to despoil the Alaskan wilderness in pursuit of a few jobs (and more to come cleaning up), the International Brotherhood of Teamsters has rediscovered the deep concern for the environment first trotted out for the "Teamsters and Turtles" coalition that derailed the World Trade Organization in Seattle. On May Day, the Teamsters signed on to a lawsuit challenging the Bush administration's decision to allow Mexican trucks to enter the United States.

"Trucks that cross our border from Mexico must meet U.S. emissions standards," said Teamsters President James Hoffa. "We should not allow these trucks to further pollute the air we breathe." This is the first known instance of the Teamsters union expressing concern over diesel emissions.

## Janitors rebel

Outraged at the Service Employees International Union's decision to merge their Local 87 into a much larger statewide local, some 2,000 San Francisco janitors have filed petitions with the National Labor Relations Board in an effort to stop paying SEIU dues.

SEIU seized control of Local 87 Jan. 28, kicking out its officers and staff in order to force the merger. When many members stopped paying dues in protest, the International sent out letters threatening to have them fired. The petition seeks a secret ballot vote to make dues payments voluntary.

Local 87 represents 3,500 mostly Latino, Asian and Arabic janitors who clean office buildings in downtown San Francisco.

## Joint UAW-company funds probed

The Labor Department is trying to pry open the books of three multimillion-dollar funds jointly run by the United Auto Workers and Detroit automakers. The funds are meant to finance training for hourly auto workers, but also spend money on political receptions, stock-car racing, lavish parties, and private planes for union officials.

The UAW and General Motors have called their joint fund "the largest privately funded educational program in the world" and combined, the three funds spent more than \$1.3 billion between 1996 and 1999.

The UAW and the automakers established the first joint funds in 1982 to retrain thousands of laid-off workers who had little hope of returning to a U.S. automaker's factory. Over the years, the funds have grown to encompass child-care and fitness centers

for members. They also help pay college tuition. Auto companies contribute 19 cents an hour for every hour worked by hourly workers, as well as overtime penalties. While most funds go the intended purposes, the funds have high administrative expenses and have often served as a slush fund for company and UAW officials.

The Labor Dept. is now considering requiring the union or the joint funds to file financial disclosure statements and make them available to rank-and-file members.

Dave Yettaw, a former president of UAW Local 599 in Flint and a retired autoworker, has been pushing for reporting requirements for the joint funds since 1998. "This money comes out of the members' economic package," Yettaw said. "This is a huge sum of money that goes unreported."



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# Reviews: Standoff shows need for new road

REVIEWED BY ALEXIS BUSS

*American Standoff*. Premieres on HBO June 10. Produced by Barbara Kopple; directed by Kristi Jacobson. 95 minutes.

*American Standoff* looks at the present-day Teamsters, dealing with the baggage of past mobster control and the continuing battle for the driver's seat by the forces lined up behind Hoffa Jr. and Leedham through one of the most depressing strikes of our time, Overnite Transportation. I had the chance to see it as a part of a May Day labor film series in Boston.

The drive began in 1994, instigated by a number of factors, especially downsizing in the wake of a Union Pacific buy-out. According to Hoffa, 4,000 Overnite workers signed union cards over five years. Certification elections resulted in 37 of 166 terminals voting union. By 1999 negotiations had been going on for four years, and after 165 sessions talks broke down completely.

## The 32-month-and-counting "three-week" strike

Although we don't see a lot of the problems that precipitated the unfair labor practice strike (since 1994, the Teamsters have filed over 1,000 ULP charges against Overnite), we do see a discussion of the strike's strategy in a conference call with Teamsters V.P. and Organizing Director John Murphy, Freight Director Phil Young and President Jim Hoffa.

In the conversation, Murphy anticipates that the strike would only last three weeks. He strongly advocated that it was time to go out. Young agrees, suggesting that they "put a picket up everywhere we can get a picket up." Hoffa was more cautious, stressing how committed Overnite was to keeping the union out. But the "biggest thing" is the political schedule for Hoffa's own re-election in 2001. He was very concerned about a loser of a strike getting in the way of his political

ambitions, and Murphy agreed wholeheartedly, offering reassurance.

## Doomed from the start?

Fifteen hundred workers were called out on strike. The count at three critical terminals on Day 1 was frightening: Memphis 250 strikers, 210 scabs; Atlanta 180 strikers, 60 scabs; Chicago 38 strikers, 20 scabs. Barely a majority in three of the most critical terminals, and in total the 1,500 strikers were a distinct minority of Overnite's 8,200 person work force.

The nation's sixth-largest trucking company, and largest non-union company, Overnite spent \$20 million preparing for the strike, hiring security guards and attorneys and offering bloated pay packages to scabs. After three weeks out, the Teamsters began looking for casual work for the strikers. The union estimated that freight volume was down 20 to 80 percent, which suggests that either research wasn't being done well or that the union was desperately trying to present a best-case scenario to the strikers.

## "Failure is not an option"

Over and over again, we hear how important this strike is to the future of the Teamsters. John Murphy describes the campaign as "a do or die situation, failure is not an option." But it's the same old story. Pickets are limited by injunctions to the point where walking the line is completely symbolic, the law is stacked against the workers, and the company hires replacements and tries to do business as usual. What's so frustrating is that this is the same scenario that plays out in almost every American strike. Nothing new was tried, even though it was absolutely necessary given the ratio of union to non-union workers and the ability of large corporations to withstand any sort of strike.

Major strategies were the use of "ambulatory pickets." Unable to stop freight from

leaving Overnite's terminals, pickets follow trucks to customers and urge them to stop using Overnite. This so infuriated the company that they would send out empty trucks, sometimes guarded by several security cars, to lead pickets on wild goose chases.

The union initiated a boycott of Bed Bath and Beyond, but at the Boston screening Murphy, who answered questions afterwards, gave the impression that the boycott was off and could not tell a fairly eager audience what could be done on the consumers' end to help. While it's doubtful that removing Bed Bath and Beyond from Overnite's customer roster would change the company's position, a series of public campaigns with real backing from the union could make a difference.

A problem throughout this strike is an over-reliance on labor law. Time and time again in *Standoff*, the entire fate of the strike is put into the hands of the law. Even one of the more militant moments documented was simply a run-of-the-mill legal procedure dressed up to look like a radical act. Murphy gathers two busloads of Teamsters to deliver an NLRB subpoena to CEO Leo Suggs at corporate headquarters. Not that it was wrong to do it this way, but getting excited about Board subpoenas strikes me as being fairly confused about the nature of the process.

Missing from the Overnite strike, or at least the parts of it we see in *American Standoff*, is an engaged rank-and-file. It is especially a stark contrast to the activities and mass meetings we saw in Kopple's *American Dream*, where Hormel meatpackers from Local P-9 held together with cultural activities, massive rallies, caravans to other plants, and so on. Meetings documented in *American Standoff* showed a handful of members, often gathered around a speaker phone to hear Murphy, Young or Hoffa talk about the state of the strike.

The hopelessness of the workers, which derives from a strike that has no end in sight,

plus a very clear lack of information sharing and rank-and-file self-activity, is articulated at the most depressing meeting we see. It begins with a striker suggesting that they give up the ghost. The meeting leader insists that the union "can't pull the picket line down until it's through the courts." Another striker suggests handling the situation like "real Teamsters," that is to say by "busting heads." Nobody agreed with this, and the need to keep the strike non-violent was discussed.

This is a very cogent issue; an Overnite driver was shot during the strike and the company used picket-line violence to frighten its non-striking workforce. A former employee came forward during the strike to say that he was offered \$10,000 by Overnite management to execute violent acts in order to smear the union. No criminal charges were ever filed on the company, although they did reinstate some workers accused of wrongdoing. I would have liked to know more about this from *Standoff*, and I could have done with a little less newsreel footage about Hoffa the First, talking tough.

Much time is spent discussing how the union is trying to reform its mobbed-up image. And while there is much allusion to the "civil war" being waged within the Teamsters, I found it a fairly superficial treatment. Carey's fall from grace is not discussed in any detail. John Murphy's name might ring a bell – in 1996, he was the man who discovered Ron Carey's campaign money-laundering by dissecting the books. It was left out entirely. Leedham makes a cameo, filmed during a TDU convention, calling for a return to the days that Carey showed were possible. I think it will be lost on most viewers.

What I'm afraid might come across is that it's impossible to win these days. But that's a reason to watch *American Standoff*. The problems are glaring at us in our faces, and it's up to us to figure out how to make a new road to travel on.

# A labor novel for kids only a boss could love

REVIEWED BY RACHEL ROSEN

*Rockbuster*, by Gloria Skurzynski (New York: Atheneum Books for Young [sic] Readers), 2001.

*Big Bill spat at Tommy's feet, threw the telegram on the floor, and stomped out of the room, muttering, "Sanctimonious little prig..."* p. 248

Ah, my sentiments exactly – to the author of this book, that is. I had high hopes for *Rockbuster*. I was thrilled to come across a novel about the IWW, since so little fiction is written about it. Even more intriguing was that the book was aimed at young adults – the history of the labour movement, particularly revolutionary unionism, is all but completely neglected in public school education.

*Rockbuster*, the story of an 18-year-old Utah coal miner who is asked to succeed Joe Hill as a Wobbly songwriter, could have been an opportunity to bring the history and politics of the IWW to life for an entire generation. Instead, it is a piece of propaganda that would impress Ayn Rand, thinly disguised as a stomach-churning love story.

The last children's book I read was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, in which the reader is asked to believe in wizards, dragons, and soccer played on broomsticks. Nevertheless, it required less suspension of disbelief than this story, in which a kindly mine owner donates a year's wages to an employee who has lost his leg in a tunnel collapse. Or half a class of wealthy Oxford students enlisting to fight in the front lines during World War I. Or an egomaniacal Joe Hill asking a teenager he's never met and who has no interest in the IWW to take his place as the "official" Wobbly bard. Or Utah as paradise.

The historical inaccuracies go far enough to slander real-life people. Big Bill Haywood is caricatured as a violent automaton and a possible murderer. (The author also writes a

bizarre description of his missing eye. Would it have been too much research to find one of the numerous pictures of him?) Joe Hill is depicted more sympathetically, but the author still manages to blame him for his own death – after all, he only needed to give up the name of the man who shot him, or throw himself at the mercy of the state, and he could have spent the rest of his days happily rotting in prison. If he had a grave, I'm sure he'd be spinning in it.

Skurzynski's original characters are even less compelling. Every wealthy character is practically saintly, every worker either a naïve pawn or a brutal thug. Her protagonist, Tommy, spouts tidbits of wisdom like, "Dammit! Why is it that the workers are the ones always harping about class?"

The one readable aspect of Ayn Rand's novels is that despite their deplorable politics, they generally hold together as readable stories. *Rockbuster* doesn't even accomplish this. It manages to incorporate every cliché plotline about mining communities. The young miner who falls for the owner's lively daughter? Check. The long-suffering mother who loses her husband in an accident and swears she will never, ever marry another miner? Check. The only missing element was the climactic mine explosion that kills off most of the characters, and its absence was palpable. None of the characters were fleshed out enough to make me care about their fates.

Both theme and ambiance also fall flat. Skurzynski flirts with concepts of social justice, class struggle, militarism and racism, but never addresses any of them in depth. Tommy's final epiphany – that he should become a lawyer and dedicate himself to "real" justice – makes no sense even in a literary context, since the novel never once establishes justice as a dominant motif. Nor

does it capture the milieu of the mine or the community – the dialogue came from Dawson's Creek characters with sooty faces.

Skurzynski's point, if she has one, is a fuzzy liberal assurance that rich or poor, boss or worker, we all suffer equally and we're all the same inside. One does not have to be a leftist to take issue with this conclusion. Instead of dealing with the gritty, brutal reality of war, exploitation and class, we get lines like:

"As Tommy listed to the long oration, he realized it was skewed with half-truths and distortions, dishing out prejudice against the wealthy class in the same way the wealthy class clung to their prejudices against the working class. The speaker kept demanding justice for the poor and revenge against the wealthy. But how could there be justice for the working class if justice didn't exist for everyone? Wouldn't that lead to injustice for all?" (250)

She faults Joe Hill, and Tommy's Uncle Jimmy, for their deaths at the hands of a firing squad and Pinkerton detectives respectively, because they held onto their ideals and fought for their class. This might have been an acceptable argument from an extreme pacifist perspective (a la Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, which argues that there is absolutely no ideal worth dying for). She practically venerates, however, the character of Glenn Farnham, who willingly enlists in the British army to fight a senseless imperialist war. The message seems to be that dying for a colonial state is acceptable, even heroic, but fighting for an eight-hour day and an end to child labour is somehow less noble.

*Rockbuster* could have been a good novel. It could have been the story of a young man's awakening through the struggles and sacrifices of those around him. Had the plot re-

volved around IWW organizing in the mine, it could have built to a climax where Tommy was forced to choose between allegiance to his fellow workers and his love for his girlfriend. (The choice, as presented in the novel, is practically nonexistent – Tommy never demonstrates enough interest in the union or in his identity as a worker to make us wonder which direction he will take.) He could come to realize that his teenage hormones are not as important as the struggle for a better future. Conversely, he could have chosen love over responsibility, but faced the consequences of inaction: continued 12-hour days, a future of meek submission to his employer, perhaps even alienation from his community. Finally, it could have been a story about music and its power to bring hope and inspiration even in dark times – but both main characters cared so little about their music that one wondered why the author chose to make them musicians at all.

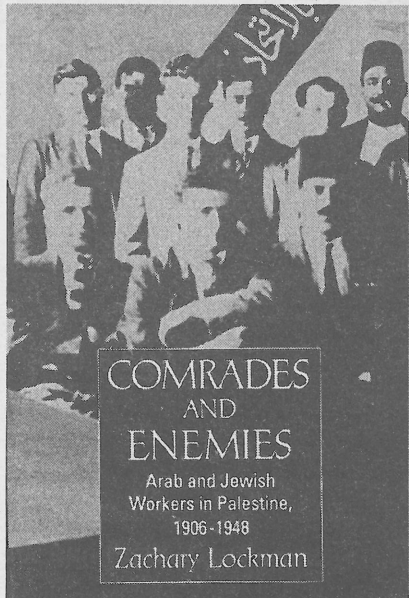
The only good thing that I can say for *Rockbuster* is that the passages of lyrics written by a self-absorbed 18-year-old do actually sound like they were written by a self-absorbed 18-year-old. But I don't know if that says much for the author's talents. The best parts of the book were the quotes from Joe Hill's songs and the Preamble to the IWW Constitution. The rest seemed an unevenly written mess of hypocritical Christian piety, union bashing, and a vindication of child labour practices.

It's easy to forget how quickly our history can be lost, especially in the hands of those whose interests are served by distorting the truth. To paraphrase Utah Phillips, a long memory is our most powerful weapon. *Rockbuster* is a reminder to all of us that it is up to us to tell our own stories. If we don't, our past will be rewritten for us.



# books for rebel workers

## New this month



### **Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948** by Zachary Lockman

"A unique and welcome perspective which will challenge some and inspire others in the field. . . The scholarship involved, with its fluent familiarity with this extraordinary range of sources--a range which very few historians are capable of using--is remarkable, as is the quality of the prose, and the breadth and maturity of the judgments made. This book will become the standard work in a field where much has been written."--Rashid Khalidi, University of Chicago

In *Comrades and Enemies* Zachary Lockman explores the interactions between the Arab and Jewish working classes, labor movements, and

worker-oriented political parties in Palestine just before and during the period of British colonial rule. Unlike most of the historical and sociological literature on Palestine in this period, *Comrades and Enemies* avoids treating the Arab and Jewish communities as if they developed independently of each other. Instead of focusing on politics, diplomacy, or military history, Lockman draws on detailed archival research in both Arabic and Hebrew, and on interviews with activists, to delve into the country's social, economic, and cultural history, showing how Arab and Jewish societies in Palestine helped to shape each other in significant ways. *Comrades and Enemies* presents a narrative of Arab-Jewish relations in Palestine that extends and complicates the conventional story of primordial identities, total separation, and unrelenting conflict while going beyond both Zionist and Palestinian nationalist mythologies.

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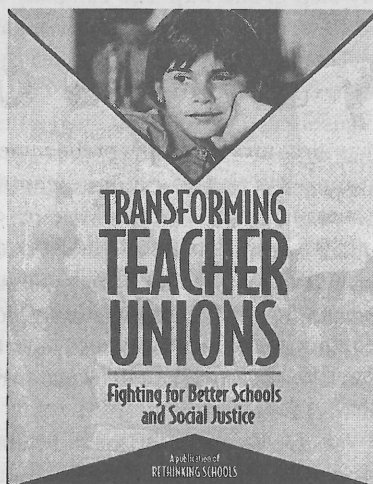
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by Frank Cain

The Australian IWW, which got started in 1907 to bring the flag of "One Big Unionism" down-under, was a major force in opposing Australia's involvement in World War I. So efficient was its Anti-War campaign, which opposed conscription, blind nationalism, and the thirst for blood of the employing class all over the world, the Australian government banned the union in 1916, and attempted to drive the organization into the ground in 1917 by deporting prominent leaders. **\$16.00**

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**Blackboard Unions** By Marjorie Murphy Murphy tells the story of the struggle to unionize public school teachers, a group workers traditionally considered "professionals" but paid starvation wages and denied any say in their working conditions. We learn of the struggle to win the right to organize, efforts to crush radicals in union ranks, and of the union's abandonment of its allies when it was forced to confront civil rights issues at home. While it has been ten years since this book's publication, the tensions between solidarity and professionalization and union democracy and business unionism continue to confront these workers, as does the fight to defend education from the assault on public services that has characterized American political life for decades. **Special price: \$10.00**

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Sweatshop Warriors highlights the voices of the pioneers of the anti-sweatshop movement: immigrant women workers. In this up-close look at these organizers, Miriam Ching Yoon Louie records the voices of these working-class heroines sounding the charges for the anti-WTO legions. **256pp \$18.00**

### **Made in Indonesia** by Dan La Botz

A dynamic new labor movement emerged in Indonesia in the 1990s, helping to bring down the brutal Suharto dictatorship in 1998. Through rare personal interviews with the activists who are leading the rebirth of struggle for democratic rights in the world's fourth-largest country, La Botz draws valuable lessons for workers seeking to build international labor solidarity. **256pp \$18.00**

## Union Democracy

**Democracy Is Power: Rebuilding Unions from the Bottom Up** by Mike Parker & Martha Gruelle. This book offers practical ideas of how the rank and file can run unions. Major discussion of Teamsters for a Democratic Union experiences in this area. **254pp \$17.00**



## Unionists blockade Melbourne to protest low wages

Angry unionists shut down several of central Melbourne's busiest carparks and blockaded city streets for two hours May 10, causing morning rush hour traffic chaos.

Ken Jackson, a car park attendant, said the protest showed what workers can do if they stand together. "We are the people who no one wants to take note of ... the workers who are looked straight through when people rush off to their well-paid offices."

Workers were protesting an AUS\$18 a week minimum pay rise awarded yesterday by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. The ACTU had sought a \$25-a-week rise to counter the impact of the GST and electricity price hikes on poorer workers.

Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) Victorian Branch Secretary Brian Daley said he was "bitterly disappointed" by the wage decision, which would only amount to a \$12 a week increase in take-home pay while the cost of living had risen \$85 a week over the past three years.

"Living on this kind of wage means a constant struggle and stress to pay rent, heating, food, telephone and medical expenses," Daley said.

The federal government and employers had urged the commission to limit a \$10-a-week increase to award employees making AUS\$507.20 a week or less. Meanwhile the prime minister's pay went up \$179 per week.

## Police barred from ZCTU meetings

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions has won a High Court ruling barring members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police from attending future union meetings without invitations.

The ruling follows the disruption of the ZCTU General Council meeting March 14 by police who wanted to attend the meeting. They claimed the right to do so under the Public Order and Security Act. When ZCTU refused police entry the meeting was cancelled.

High Court Justice Moses Chinhengo said the meetings were exempted from the Act, which requires the organizers of public gatherings to notify the authorities of their plans. The judge also said the general council meetings did not conform to the POSA definition of "gathering."

The government threatened to outlaw the ZCTU May 2, in response to plans to stage a general strike announced during May Day rallies. The government has also been pressing affiliates to withdraw and join the smaller government-controlled Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions.

## Papua New Guinea dockers strike

Employers have gone to press in a bid to force more than 500 dockworkers at Papua New Guinea's two main ports, Port Moresby and Lae, back to work after the Maritime Workers' Industrial Union struck May 11.

Several vessels were stranded in port by the strike. The strike follows more than a year of efforts to negotiate a pay hike to compensate workers for inflation over the past three years. The price of food and other basic services rose by more than 30 percent over the period. Employers have offered a 3 percent increase which workers see as an insult.

"The National Government's economic policies continue to favor the rich, the powerful and the big national and foreign companies," noted MWIU president John Mahuk. "Corruption, misappropriation and financial abuse have become rampant and a cancer eating away the very foundations of our society."



## A "socially responsible" McDonald's

"We know we are not perfect," announced McDonald's CEO Jack Greenberg in the introduction to McDonald's new Social Responsibility Report. "Our global business brings with it global responsibilities."

As proof of the company's global concern it offers 46 pages of global nonsense. Underneath the self-congratulatory hype, lists of charitable contributions, dubious awards (it would be interesting to know exactly how McDo Brazil was named "The Best Company to Work For") and repetitive incantations of "commitment," "core values," "mission," etc., the report fails to offer a single verifiable criterion for evaluating McDonald's industrial relations practices.

The "People" section of the report, where one might expect to find an assessment of the state of union rights, contains no reference to them. Nowhere does the word "union" appear. There is simply no mention of the rights of the hundreds of thousands of employees around the world who wear the McDonald's uniform.

"In the guise of a social responsibility report," the International Union of Foodworkers says, "McDonald's has produced a manual for union-busting. Rather than rights

## Yarra sailors seize ship to protect jobs

Hundreds of people rallied on the docks of Melbourne, Australia, May 10 in support of 17 sailors who are occupying the CSL Yarra to prevent it becoming a floating sweatshop.

The sailors were ordered to leave the vessel after CSL Australia sold the Yarra to a subsidiary, Barbados-based Canada Steamship Lines Pacific Shipping and reflagged the vessel in the Bahamas tax haven. CSL has cut off power, water and sewage facilities, and plans to import a replacement low-wage crew from the Ukraine once the Australian crew is evicted from the ship.

The Maritime Union of Australia is fighting the move, noting that the seamen are being thrown of our work even though their jobs plying the Australia coastwise trade would continue – only with workers whose poverty is being exploited to pay them a lower wage to do the same work. The MUA has also appealed to Ukrainian unions to refuse the work.

Nearly 100 Australian seafarers and other unionists picketed CSL offices in Sydney May 2, a day after a successful rally in Port Pirie, where the Yarra is berthed.

Canada Steamship Lines is majority owned by Canadian Finance Minister Paul Martin through a "blind trust" arrangement, enabling him to reap the benefits of his ruthless global empire while pretending to have clean hands.

at work, McDonald's offers employees 'principle-centered people leadership.' ...

"McDonald's, moreover, is not a company to rest on its past accomplishments. Workers may still feel they have a need for a union, and the company is ready. McDonald's has 'developed Human Resources Consulting Centers, designed to provide expertise, consulting and advice to field HR personnel, staff and restaurant managers.'

"IUF members ... around the world have a great deal of experience with these techniques, as they are applied everywhere workers at McDo join together to seek collective representation at their workplace. Yes, there are unions which have won recognition and collective bargaining agreements with McDonald's, but they have had to fight every step of the way. The company has devoted enormous resources to ensure that McDonald's employees are denied their collective rights and unions are crushed. ... Franchisees have actually closed units rather than agree to union recognition, as recently happened at several restaurants in Canada.

"McDonald's knows that the entire labour movement has mobilized in defense of trade union rights in Norway, Iceland and Denmark, to take but three examples from recent years, when McDonald's announced that it would not be bound by national agreements in the sector."

A unionist at the McDonald's Russia food processing plant has received death threats.

## Metalworkers say no to "moderation"

Germany's IG Metall metalworkers' union launched a wave of strikes May 6 that is sweeping from factory to factory – the first industry-wide walkouts there since 1995. The union is seeking wage increases of 6.5 percent in national negotiations that growing numbers of employers are bypassing through local agreements or transferring work across the border.

"Neoliberalism has meant nothing more than a redistribution of wealth in favor of industry," said Mr. Huber, the head of IG Metall in the industrial state of Baden-Württemberg.

Employers and the government have urged the union to accept a 3 percent increase, saying "moderation" is necessary to reduce unemployment. But after years of watching workers' buying power decline while unemployment rates shot up, workers aren't buying it.

"They want to get more, and I think they are going to get it," said Martin Werding, a labor economist at the Ifo Institute for Economic Research in Munich. "The unions have lost patience with wage moderation."

## Indonesian labor fights privatization

Over 120 labor activists from throughout Indonesia met in April to organize a campaign against trade liberalization and the privatization of state-owned enterprises, arguing that such moves would only inflict more suffering on Indonesian workers.

Dita Indah Sari of the National Front for the Indonesian Workers' Struggle (FNPBI) said free trade and privatization had brought no prosperity, equality or peace to Indonesian workers, but only misery.

"We are meeting to build solidarity among fellow workers and to outline strategies for our struggle (against globalization and privatization)," said Eddy Riswanto of the Indonesian Agriculture Workers' Union.

Setiono of the Greater Jakarta Workers' Association (SBJ) said the conference also discussed efforts to strengthen workers' bargaining position. "We reject government policies that enhance globalization as well as disadvantage the workers," Setiono stressed. "Will the workers become prosperous after state-owned companies are sold? Will Indonesia ever be able to repay its offshore loans by selling state-owned enterprises?" Setiono asked.

The conference also demanded that May 1 be recognized as a national holiday.

## Indian workers protest 'reforms'

Indian workers plan to launch further strikes following an April 16 general strike over proposed changes to labor laws that have raised fears of huge job losses across the subcontinent.

The day-long strike by nearly 10 million government workers brought financial markets to a near standstill as most banks in the country were shut. Ports and mines were shut throughout the day, with walk-outs affecting 220 state-run firms.

"If the government does not consider our demands, we will continue with our strikes," said W.R. Varadarajan, secretary of the Centre for Indian Trade Unions.

The strike was organized to protest an amendment to the Industrial Relations Act that would allow firms with less than 1,000 employees to relocate or fire their employees without prior authorization. Current law sets the threshold at 100 employees.

The move to amend the law is seen by the Indian labor movement as part of a longer-term process of economic "reform" which began in 1991 and has included the closure of unprofitable factories, increased access to domestic markets for foreign multinationals, privatization of public services, and downsizing in both the public and private spheres.

Over the last six years 1.5 million workers have lost their jobs, of which about 400,000 were employees of government-run firms and 125,000 of banks.

## Italian workers fight labor reforms

Millions of Italians joined a general strike April 16 to protest government plans to make it easier to sack workers. Taking part in the eight-hour national walkout were members of Italy's three largest unions. The strike is in response to Premier Silvio Berlusconi's effort to "reform" Italian labor laws to attract foreign investment. Unions say the reforms would cost dearly in hard-won job security, widen the gap between rich and poor and undermine Italy's social stability.

## Britain: Piling up work

The number of British workers working two jobs has soared by 28 percent over the past 17 years to over a million, many of them part-timers trying to get by. The number of women with second jobs increased from 324,000 in 1984 to 670,000 last year.